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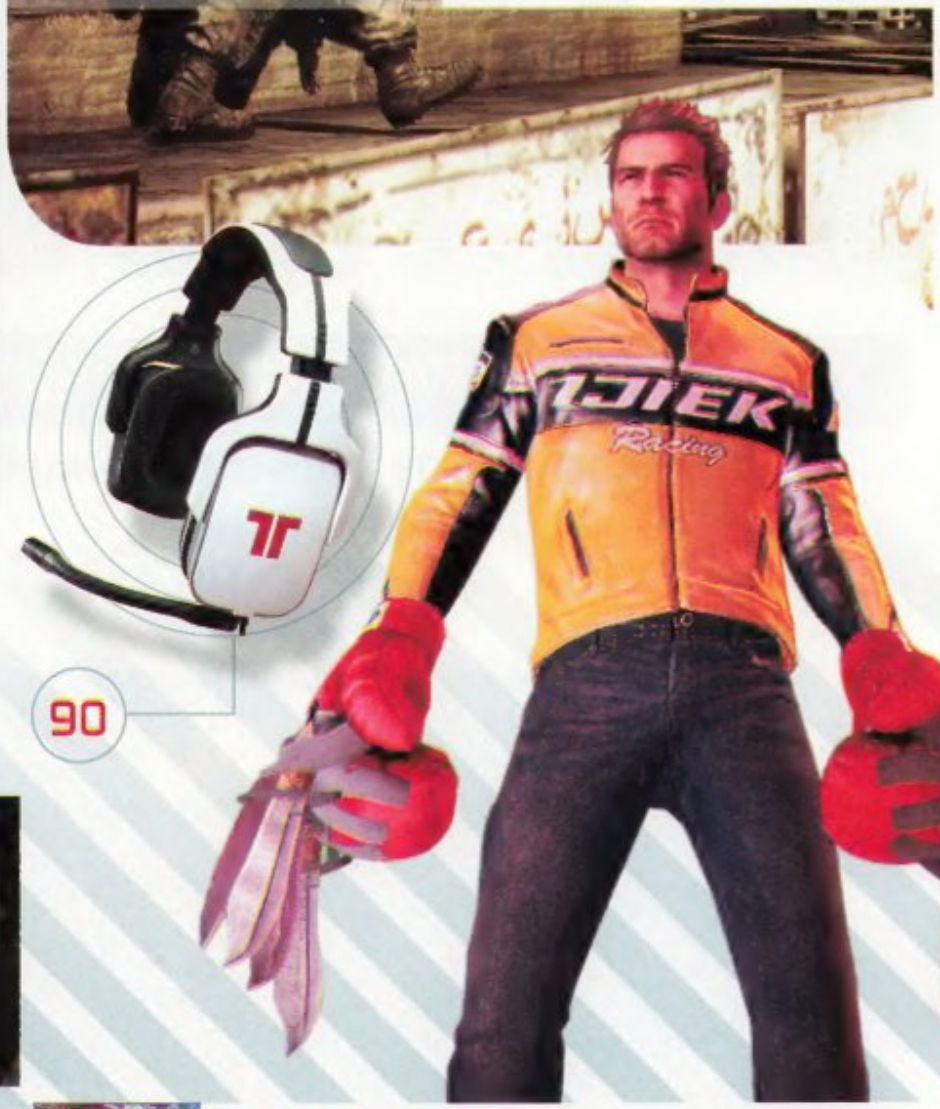

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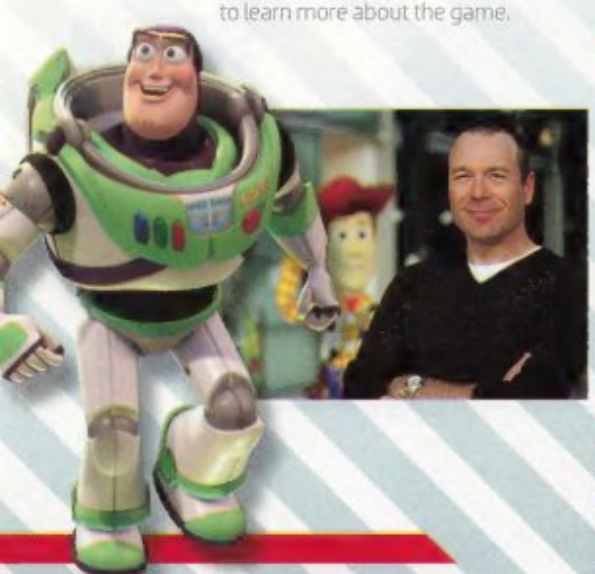

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MEET THE STAFF

Wil O'Neal
The "leader of the pack," Wil loves his sports games. So, yeah, expect a lot of talk about *Madden* this and *Madden* that.

Andy Eddy
While his official title is "Executive Editor" Andy is more like the Zen master whose even keel keeps this ship on course.

Jenny Esdaile
Arguably the world's most understanding Art Director, Wil and Andy wonder which last-minute screenshot change will make her go postal.

Letter from the EDITOR

WELCOME TO @GAMER

Launching a magazine is one of those endeavors that always sounds like fun in the beginning. You put together an awesome team of editors and designers. You brainstorm about how this magazine is going to differ from all of the rest. You play around with different layouts, formats, and editorial ideas, and before you know it, you realize that you actually have a hard deadline at which time you have to... you know, make the thing.

That, I'm happy to say, brings us to @GAMER: The Official Games Magazine of Best Buy. @GAMER is about one thing and one thing only: Helping gamers like us make the most out of our gaming experience. Step into any store or open any gaming magazine or visit any gaming website and you're bombarded with hoards of gaming options. The thing is, who has time to wade through all of that? Our mission with @GAMER is simple: Help gamers quickly figure out which games are hot and worth your hard-earned money.

And speaking of your hard-earned money, every issue of @GAMER will come packed with coupons that you can use at Best Buy to save $$$ on the hottest games. So be sure to come back every issue to find out what's hot and to get in on those awesome coupons.

William O'Neal
Editor In Chief

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QUESTIONS?: here are the answers

Q: HOW IS @GAMER RELATED TO BEST BUY AND FUTURE?

A: @GAMER is published jointly by Best Buy and Future. Best Buy is one of the world's leading destinations for all things gaming, while Future is the publisher of such well-known magazines as PC Gamer and *Official Xbox Magazine*. We've teamed up to bring you a magazine that no one else could, with unprecedented insider access to all that's new in the world of games.

Q: DOES @GAMER ONLY COVER GAMES THAT BEST BUY SELLS? WHAT ABOUT DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT (DLC) AND FREE-TO-PLAY GAMES?

A: No. @GAMER, while the Official Games Magazine of Best Buy, is about gaming first. With that in mind, our goal is to provide our readers with the best possible information about the world of video gaming. Our readers play and want to know about downloadable content, so it's our mission to keep you informed. You also play free-to-play games, so we'd be remiss to keep you in the dark about happenings in this arena, as well.

Q: WHERE CAN I BUY @GAMER?

A: @GAMER is currently available in Best Buy stores and via subscription.

Q: BEST BUY WANTS TO SELL GAMES, DO YOU HAVE TO SAY THAT EVERYTHING IS GOOD?

A: @GAMER is only a valuable resource in so far as it's a credible source for honest gaming information. That said, being a print magazine, we're subject to the limitations of a page count. Because of this we're going to try to focus on games that are worth your time and money.

Q: I CAN GET GAMING INFORMATION FOR FREE ON THE INTERNET. WHY SHOULD I BUY A MAGAZINE?

A: First and foremost, @GAMER's staff has more than 40 years combined experience working in the gaming industry. We know games. And most importantly, because every issue of @GAMER comes with coupons for the games you're gonna buy anyway, the subscription pretty much pays for itself ;-)

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ON THE COVER
After spending some time with Medal of Honor, we were stoked to put it on our first cover.

GAMER WINS BIG!

IN 2K SPORTS COMPETITION

Alabama man wins $1,000,000 playing *Major League Baseball 2K10*

• By William O'Neal

Every time a gamer wins actual money playing video games, pundits like to wax nostalgic about all the naysayers who told us we were wasting our lives playing games—"you'll never go anywhere," they crowed. I'm sure that Wade McGilberry of Semmes, Alabama, heard similar criticisms growing up. Of course, after winning $1,000,000 pitching a perfect game in 2K Sports' *Major League Baseball 2K10*, he got the last laugh. (And probably the next drink tab.)

> "It was actually my wife who convinced me to go for it."

The *MLB 2K10* contest—which began on March 2, 2010, at 12:01AM, and ended May 1, 2010, at 11:59PM—required players to compete in "MLB Today" mode before choosing to participate. Available on the Xbox 360 through Xbox Live and the PS3 through the PlayStation Network, the game then automatically defaulted to the settings required to ensure a relatively level playing field for all of the contestants. Here's where things got complicated: In order to be eligible, players had to record their games with a camera or via a digital recording before submitting the gameplay footage via DVD. In order to ensure that everything was on the up and up, 2K Sports partnered with Twin Galaxies International, the outfit best known for providing the information included in Guinness World Records: Gamer's Edition. After the competition was over, it was determined that McGilberry was the first person to throw a verified perfect game in *Major League Baseball 2K10*.

Like any good teammate, McGilberry couldn't claim that the victory was all due to him. "It was actually my wife who convinced me to go for it," he said, adding, "I never thought I'd actually win a million dollars playing a video game, it's all still sinking in for me."

According to 2K Sports, McGilberry threw the verified perfect game on the first day of the competition. And while many thought the feat to be technically impossible, McGilberry considered the victory to be a rather "nice return on my investment."

Two for One

GET IT!

ACTIVISION ANNOUNCES:

Buy *Singularity*, Get *Prototype* for free

If there's one thing gamers love, it's free stuff. With that in mind, Activision is doing gamers a solid. If you buy *Singularity*, which should be on store shelves as you read this, they'll throw in last year's epic action gore fest, *Prototype*. Set in a futuristic Manhattan where all Hell has literally broken loose, *Prototype* was met with some critical acclaim...all of which makes the giveaway even more appealing.

According to Activision, for a limited time, gamers who buy *Singularity* for the Xbox 360 will receive a mail-in offer to get *Prototype* for free.

While *Prototype* is a third-person action title that boasts frenetic gameplay and all of the blood and guts any gamer could want, *Singularity*, considered a first-person sci-fi shooter, is a little more cerebral. It incorporates time-bending elements that will have you jumping back and forth between the 1950s and a not-too-distant future where, for lack of a better phrase, all Hell has broken loose.

This is what all Hell looks like when it breaks loose.

BULLET STORM

From the makers of *Gears of War* and *Painkiller*, prepare yourself for some seriously over-the-top first-person action

• By William O'Neal

First-person shooters come in several varieties; you have your simulations like *Ghost Recon* and *Splinter Cell*, you have the myriad war games like *Medal of Honor* and *Call of Duty*; and then there are the ridiculous run-and-gun and blow stuff up in the most insane fashion imaginable games. That's exactly what developers People Can Fly and Epic Games have in mind for their upcoming title, *Bulletstorm*.

Gaming industry veteran Cliff "Don't Call Me Cliffy B" Bleszinski and producer Tanya "Mouth Like a Sailor" Jesson recently came to SF to show off the finer points of *Bulletstorm*. Billed as a sci-fi first-person shooter the game boats two "reluctant" anti-heroes, Grayson Hunt, a smarmy space-pirate with a bad attitude on the road to redemption, and Ishi Sato, a cyborg of sorts. After crash-landing on a far-out planet called Stygia, the two are forced to do battle with their arch nemesis as well as hordes of mutated humans, plants, and all sorts of nasties in the once resort town of Elysium.

GAMEPLAY IS TRULY FRENETIC WITH COMBOS APLENTY.

Adding to the fun, the game's dialog is being written by Rick Remender (*The Punisher* and *Fear Agent*), so players can expect tons of witty dialog. Gameplay is truly frenetic with combos aplenty. In the demo that we saw, Epic's Tanya Jesson seemed to relish showing us all of the ways that you could dispatch with your foes. She kicked guys onto giant cactuses, shot dudes in the junk before putting them out of their misery, and also tossed guys into the gaping maws of giant Venus flytrap-like plants before blowing the whole thing up: plant and dude alike.

Expected "sometime in 2011," we expect *Bulletstorm* to provide us with hours of gun-wielding fun.

DYNAMIC DUO?

Protagonist Grayson Hunt and his cyborg buddy Ishi Sato are locked, loaded, and ready to kick some serious butt in Bulletstorm.

▲ In *Bulletstorm*, you'll be able to do fun stuff like beat up on bad guys before kicking them into this nasty carnivorous plant. NOM!

▲ One of the more enjoyable ways to kill dudes in *Bulletstorm* is with this awesome tether-like device. Once tethered, you can toss foes onto cactuses.

DC UNIVERSE ONLINE

The summer of comic-book games gets more crowded

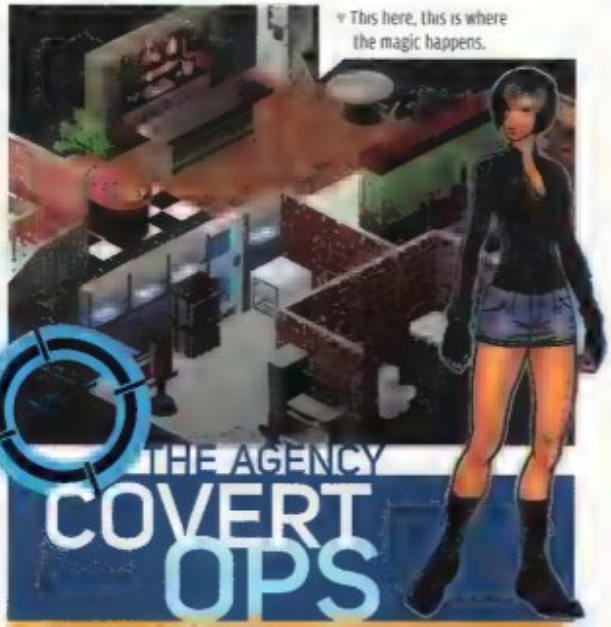
It's a good season for comic-book fans. What with *Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions* and *City of Heroes: Going Rogue* (see previews elsewhere in this issue of @GAMER) on the not-too-distant horizon, Sony Online Entertainment is getting into the mix with *DC Universe Online*. Billed as a massively multiplayer online action game, *DCUO* is a next-generation title for the PS3 and PC that, using cutting-edge physics, should push both systems to their limits.

Given the choice to play as either a superhero or super villain, players will battle to either save or conquer the universe (depending on their moral leanings). *DCUO* aims to redefine the genre by creating a combat system that hopes to be more visceral than that usually seen in MMOs. Players will be given the freedom to control individual blows as they fight alongside such storied DC personalities as Superman, Batman, The Joker, and Wonder Woman, just to name a few.

Gameplay takes place in a world inspired by the one created by epic comic-book artist Jim Lee, and the sophisticated physics engine promises to give players the freedom to interact with objects in the world. After creating their own characters, players then set out on story-driven campaigns that were written by DC writers Geoff Johns and Marv Wolfman. With levels set in Gotham City, Metropolis, Arkham Asylum, and Justice League headquarters, there will be something in this title for old-school comic fans and newcomers alike.

PLAYERS WILL BATTLE TO EITHER SAVE OR CONQUER THE UNIVERSE.

TAKE THAT... BAD GUY!
WITH SUPERHEROES GALORE, EXPECT SOME EPIC BATTLES IN DC UNIVERSE ONLINE.
POWER GIRL MAY BE BEAUTIFUL, BUT WATCH YOURSELF, SHE PACKS A WALLOP!



▼ This here, this is where the magic happens.

THE AGENCY COVERT OPS

Depending on how you define the term "gaming platform," it's easy to say that Facebook is one of the most popular gaming platforms in the world. So it comes as no surprise to us that more traditional game makers are looking to make a splash in the world of Facebook games. Enter Sony Online Entertainment (SOE), better known for such titles as *EverQuest*, *Free Realms*, *PlanetSide* and *Star Wars Galaxies*, as well as its upcoming title, *The Agency: Covert Ops*.

Considered a "social action game," *The Agency: Covert Ops* is the first full-fledged SOE game made for Facebook. With a stylized look and feel, *The Agency: Covert Ops* was developed by SOE's Tucson studio with the hopes of offering browser-based entertainment that blends an actual storyline with deeper gameplay. The result is a cross between the more casual games that Facebook users have come to expect and traditional video games that boast richer storylines, mini-games, and character customization.

Being a casual game, the storyline in *The Agency: Covert Ops* is a simple one. Your mission as an elite agent is to recruit your friends in an attempt to create and grow the most powerful covert agency on Facebook. You'll accomplish this mission by traveling the world to do battle with villains and the myriad bad guys that always like to hang around so-called super-villains. Obviously, as it's a spy game you'll have a bevy of gadgets, weapons, and intelligence at your disposal.

Additionally, typical missions will involve—you guessed it—code-breaking, safe-cracking, and explosive-ordnance detail. The players will be class-based, giving you the freedom to have a character that ranges from a "sexy super spy" to a "rugged mercenary."

Similar to other Facebook games, such as *Farmville*, creating an awesome agency headquarters will be a primary focus of the game. Of course, *The Agency: Covert Ops* is about more than just playing a free game on Facebook. SOE is currently working on a more traditional FPS-MMO called *The Agency*, which will be available for the PS3 and the PC. So, this Facebook endeavor is in many ways a clever way to whet your appetite for the final game.

You can get more information about *The Agency: Covert Ops* at http://apps.facebook.com/AgencyCovertOps.

FABLE III

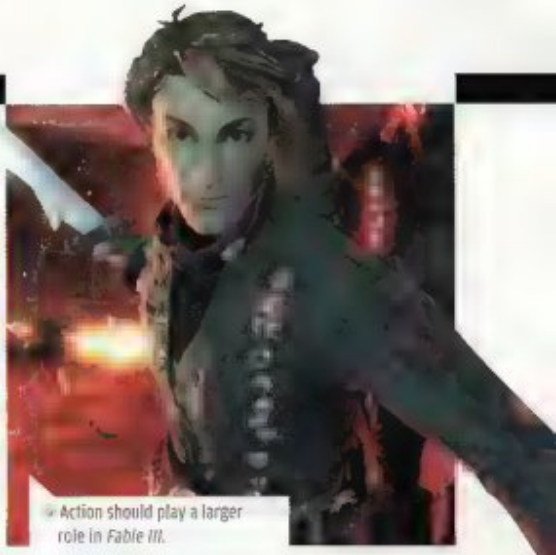
Microsoft releases new information about the next Albion adventure

• By William O'Neal

Microsoft Game Studios and developer Lionhead Studios have released new information about the latest in the storied Fable franchise of action/adventure games. Set to ship this holiday season, *Fable III* will have you play as either the son or daughter of the hero in *Fable II*, as you embark on your goal to not just become a hero in your own right, but rather to rule the fictional world of Albion.

Last fall, Lionhead Studios' Peter Molyneux said that one goal with *Fable III* was to throw out the classic action/RPG model in an attempt to create a game that is more compelling than its predecessors. Available for both Xbox 360 and Windows PCs, you'll work to gain the support of the people while you foment a revolution against the current despotic king.

Microsoft Game Studios will release standard and limited-edition versions for both platforms. The limited-edition bundle will contain "unique collectibles," downloadable content, and in-game items, such as outfits and exclusive quests.



Action should play a larger role in *Fable III*.

I can has rule?
In *Fable III* you won't just become a hero, your goal is to become the ruler of Elysium.
Who doesn't like stuff?
The Limited Edition comes with a bevy of goodies
IN FABLE III YOU WILL
PLAY AS EITHER THE
SON OR DAUGHTER
OF THE HERO FROM
FABLE II.

RED VS. BLUE: THE BLOOD GULCH CHRONICLES

The online machinima sensation is now available as a six-disc DVD set

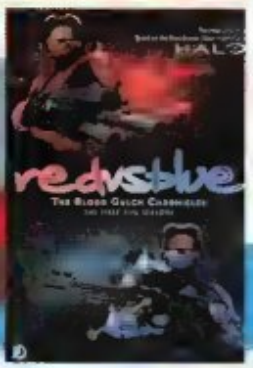
▼ There's a lot of this. Two dudes standing

Describing the *Red vs. Blue* "series" of videos to the uninitiated is a tough sell. Created by Rooster Teeth Productions back in 2003, *Red vs. Blue* is a snarky, tongue-in-cheek look at everything from war, the military, pop culture, video games and everything nerdy, all, um... "set" in the Halo universe.

The series follows the antics of ten soldiers stationed in a box canyon called Blood Gulch, where the Red Team is forced to battle the Blue Team over the simple fact that one team is red and the other blue. All of the soldiers hate each other. In fact, the "hate each other" part is universal: Red Team members hate their own comrades about as much as they hate the Blue Team, and vice versa.

The most fascinating aspect of *Red vs. Blue* is that it's created using the machinima technique, which means using a game's real-time graphics-rendering engine to create a movie. *Red vs. Blue: The Blood Gulch Chronicles* is a six-disc DVD set that contains all 100 episodes from Seasons 1 through 5 as well as tons of bonus content, including outtakes, deleted scenes, hidden tracks, and filmmaker commentaries. While the $59.95 price tag may sound a little steep, if you're a Halo fan (or fan of game culture) you'll definitely find yourself laughing at lines such as, "Women are like Voltron. The more you can hook up, the better it gets."

The series follows ten soldiers stationed in Blood Gulch.

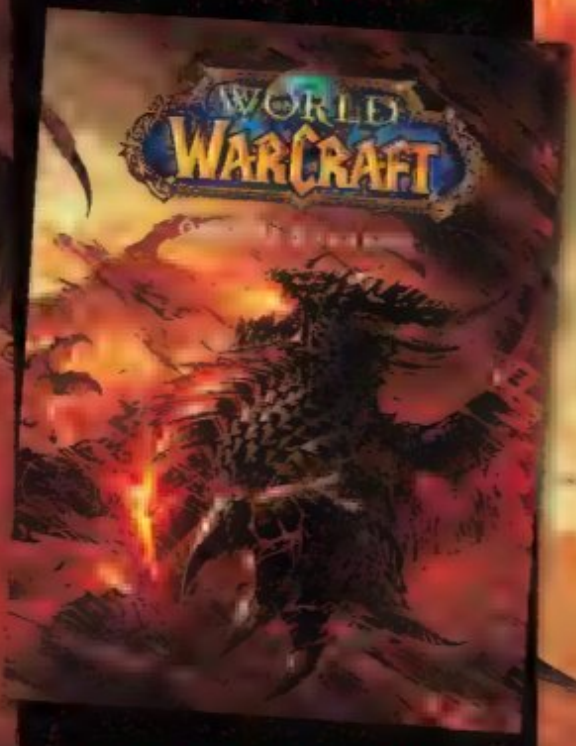


▲ The battles are truly ridiculous. With hapless soldiers on each side, you'll wonder why you're laughing so hard.

WORLD OF WARCRAFT MAGAZINE ISSUE #2

A DARK DAWNING DRAWS NEAR...

Cataclysm



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The entire *Toy Story* gang is here, but this time they have some new friends.

TOY STORY 3 COMES TO THEATERS...

@GAMER pays a rare visit to Pixar to check out both the movie and the game

By now, you've probably already seen *Toy Story 3* (the movie). You may not, however, have had a chance to check out *Toy Story 3: The Video Game*. That's where we come in. We were recently invited to Pixar Studios in Emeryville, California, to pre-screen a few select scenes from the movie, rub shoulders with some of the movie's stars, like Jeff Garland, and get some hands-on time with the game.

Hardcore gamers are often skeptical of games that are based on movies. That said, it's easy to think that a game like *Toy Story 3* is less about reinventing the gaming wheel than it is about extending the movie experience.

While *Toy Story 3* does a good job of adding to the film's storyline beyond the theater, we were excited to see a rather innovative open-ended play mode called Toy Box. Toy Box is based on developer Avalanche Software's belief about how kids play with toys. We all had toy boxes growing up and Toy Box mode should mirror that experience.

In a nutshell, Toy Box mode is a massive open-ended arena of sorts, replete with toys, gadgets, spells that you can cast, mini-games, and plenty of non-player-characters to interact with.

In the game's Story Mode, as in the movie, Andy is 18 and about to head off to college, leaving the toys in a less-than-stellar position as their usefulness has run its course. It's up to you to help them find new kids to play with...and maybe get back to Andy. Of course, there are plenty of obstacles as well as the inevitable disagreements. The toys end up at a daycare center with no lack of interested kids to play with. As one of the toys eloquently put it, "No owners. No heartbreak."

Of course, no trip to Pixar is complete without taking in the majesty of...well...being at Pixar. We met with producers who have been at Pixar since the beginning, and the campus itself is amazing.

The game will be available for all major gaming platforms and will boast several multiplayer modes that let you play as Buzz, Woody, or Jessie. It will also have certain platform-specific perks. For instance, PS3 owners can play as Zurg, and *Toy Story 3* will also support PlayStation's Move when the controller launches.

The lobby at Pixar was decorated to look like the old western town in the game.

In honor of the game's Toy Box mode, Pixar's entry was decorated like a child's play room.

Because the Andersons play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they bring home the right ones. This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Next, everyone gets a controller. Finally, the kids win.
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EA Sports to get into the USED GAMES BUSINESS?

Online Pass serves to complicate the already-complicated world of used games

In May, Peter Moore, president of EA Sports, chimed in on the plans for his company's Online Pass, calling it "a game-specific, one-time registration code that grants gamers full online access, as well as additional bonus game content." While the debate continues to rage about EA Sports' real motivation behind the creation of Online Pass, the details surrounding its implementation are simple.

In a nutshell, any new purchase of an EA Sports simulation game for the Xbox 360 and PS3 will include Online Pass as part of the purchase price of the game. That said, if someone purchases a used copy of the game and the original access code has already been redeemed by the original purchaser, the new purchaser will be required to buy a new Online Pass for $10 in order to play the game online. Gamers will also have the option to sign up for a free seven-day trial of the service to try it out.

ANY EA SPORTS SIM GAME FOR THE XBOX 360 AND PS3...WILL INCLUDE ONLINE PASS.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 is the first game to include Online Pass. You can read more about EA Sports' Online Pass at www.easports.com/onlinepass.

EA Sports takes on the used-game market.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 is the first title to require Online Pass in order to play online.

New games include Online Pass. With used games, you'll have to pay $10 to play online.

Because Sarah plays video games, there is a group of people making sure the games she plays are rated. They're called the Entertainment Software Rating Board, but that's the long way of saying it. Usually, they're just called the ESRB.
They check each game to help make sure it's right for you, your older brother, Mom and Dad, anybody. Somebody's got to do it. And they're the ones that do.
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
HELLO
my name is
Sarah

www.ESRB.org

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FUN WITH NIKOLE Z

LET'S DISH!

@GAMER's resident girl about town dishes about this month's time-[illegible]

This Month I saw....

Lost Planet 2 Launch Party

Last month, I attended the launch party for Capcom's latest shooter, *Lost Planet 2* (Xbox 360, PS3). The launch party wasn't your typical industry event with suits and monster-themed drinks, rather it doubled as a charity multiplayer tournament. The event was hosted and MC'd by Olivia Munn of G4TV's *Attack of the Show*...um...and *Playboy*. Various celebrities participated in the tournament by playing rounds of *Lost Planet 2*'s multiplayer in order to raise money for Music for Relief as a part of Capcom's month-long charity campaign. I covered the event for *The Game Show* and got a chance to talk with celebs on the red carpet about the game and of course, snow pirates. In the game you get to battle in a robot mech-suit, so naturally we had all the celebs do the robot dance for us.

◂GAME TIME! [L] G4TV's Olivia Munn was the MC at Capcom's *Lost Planet 2* event.

◂DOING IT FOR CHARITY! [R] Jon Heder got in on the action.

TOP 5

HERE ARE THE TOP FIVE GAMES THAT ARE OCCUPYING MY TIME THIS MONTH:

05.
Pokémon SoulSilver (DS)
SoulSilver is the latest game in the Pokémon series and is an updated version of Pokémon Silver that came out for the Gameboy Color in 2000.

04.
3D Dot Game Heroes (PS3)
This game is more than a 3D 8-bit Zelda. 3D Dot Game Heroes is an action-adventure game that pays homage to the classic games of the 80s.

03.
Alan Wake (Xbox 360)
Alan Wake is a psychological action thriller that's been years in the making. If you're looking for a suspenseful third-person shooter, this game's for you.

02.
Red Dead Redemption (Xbox 360, PS3)
Rockstar's latest game is so much more than just GTA on horses. And while story mode is great, if the idea of forming a posse via online multiplayer is your thing, then get this game for the Xbox 360.

01.
Super Mario Galaxy 2 (Wii)
Mario is back. Super Mario Galaxy 2 isn't much different from the first but that's not a bad thing. It builds on what worked in Super Mario Galaxy 1 but adds Yoshi. Any fan of the series needs this game.

Tips: The ever-present console conundrum!

When a game comes out on multiple platforms, whether it be for the Xbox 360, PS3, or Wii, many gamers often ask themselves which console version to get. Xbox 360 has a strong community, Wii is inviting for the whole family, and the PS3 is known for its graphics—all important qualities. However, most next-gen games rely heavily on multiplayer for their success. Next time you're thinking about getting a game for its multiplayer mode, make sure you ask yourself which version your friends will get. Graphics and gameplay are great, but teaming up with your friends with a headset is what's really going to make the game experience shine.

While [illegible] a great gaming system, the Xbox 360 and PS3 boast larger online communities.

Here's to a Summer of Great Gaming!

DISCIPLES III RENAISSANCE

"a triumphant return to the turn based strategy market." - IGN

TROPICO 3 ABSOLUTE POWER EXPANSION PACK

"the best of its kind since the original SimCity!" - GameSpy

DARKSTAR ONE BROKEN ALLIANCE

"...promises Xbox 360 gamers the experience of a lifetime" - TeamXbox

RATING PENDING TO TEEN RP-T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Akella .dat HAEMIMONT GAMES GAMING MINDS kalypso

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Games for Windows

XBOX 360

Featured Game:

FIRE 'EM UP!

Real Racing HD takes full advantage of everything the iPad has to offer.

The iPad's big screen really delivers a sense of speed.

REAL RACING HD

$9.99
Firemint, firemint.com/realracinghd

There's no better way to show off your iPad's blazing speed than with a heart-pounding, in-your-face racing game, and Real Racing HD packs an insane amount of content into a nicely priced package. Real Racing HD lets you race hatchbacks, sedans, muscle cars, and exotic rides in five game modes across 12 tracks. Local multiplayer over Wi-Fi and Bluetooth lets you put the smackdown on your roommates, even if they're driving an iPhone or iPod touch. The controls are flexible and forgiving—choose touch or tilt steering, and manual or automatic acceleration and braking, and even tweak those settings with handy sliders. Leaderboards, in-app playlists of your own tunes, ghost racing, and fully customizable car skins add additional depth, but it's the immersive graphics and true sense of speed that'll keep you coming back for more.

Paid Games:

PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES IS FUN ON ANY PLATFORM, **BUT ON THE iPAD IT REALLY SHINES.**

Blast those pigs with your assault birds!

ANGRY BIRDS HD

$4.99
Chillingo, angrybirds.com

It's birds versus pigs in this off-beat, physics-based demolition romp. Players use a slingshot to a fire a variety of birds at the pigs' fortified castles to destroy them. Sounds silly, and it is—but blasting throught the game's 105 charmingly painted levels is also a ton of fun. iPhone and iPod touch *Angry Birds* fans may be disappointed to find the iPad version is exactly the same, just at a higher resolution, but if you've never played this before, *Angry Birds* is a must!

Cook! Serve! Host! Bus! Repeat!

DINER DASH GRILLING GREEN

$4.99
PlayFirst, playfirst.com

Diner Dash comes to the iPad in an all-new adventure that has Flo racing to "green" her restaurant in the face of stricter environmental regulations. Cook seven dishes across 20 increasingly tough levels, with multi-touch controls letting you tackle more than one chore at a time—stir soup on the new "Touch Cooker 3000" animated stove while simultaneously tapping tables to have Flo drop their checks. It's frantic and it's fun, and often more exhausting than a game should be.

Killing zombies with flower power.

PLANTS VS. ZOMBIES HD

$9.99
PopCap, popcap.com/games/ipad/pvz

Plants vs. Zombies is fun on any platform, but on the iPad it really shines, thanks to the device's multi-touch screen, which recognizes up to 11 simultaneous touch inputs—you can even team up with a pal. The four tower-defense game modes also include 18 mini-games, and iPad-specific features like achievements and an exclusive mini-game called Buttered Popcorn. Mmmm.

Just tap the sides to use the flippers.

PINBALL HD

$2.99
Gameprom, gameprom.com/the-pinball-hd

This game's three stunningly rendered pinball tables drop jaws with their 3D graphics and 3D glasses support (red-cyan, green-magenta, or yellow-blue). Landscape view shows the whole table at once, while portrait follows the ball for an experience that's so immersive, you'll be amazed at how well pinball can be translated to a handheld device.

Practice single-player, then go online.

GALCON FUSION

$7.99
Galcon.com, galcon.com/fusion

This real-time arcade strategy game has you dispatching swarms of tiny ships to conquer planets and destroy your enemies. Featuring eight single-player modes, and a multiplayer mode where 11 other players can be engaged in brilliant, lag-free online play, Galcon Fusion is a simple, very fast-moving and ultimately extremely addictive game. Its ten levels of difficulty and huge array of maps provide plenty of challenge and replayability.

Game Table requires other human player

GAME TABLE

$0.99
Label Interactive, gametableapp.com

Never lose a chess piece again. Game Table brings checkers, chess, Reversi, and most card games, right to your iPad. You and your friends just hunker down around the 'Pad and intuitively flick those pieces around—the multi-touch card-game controls are particularly slick—but keeping the rules and scoring straight are up to you, which adds flexibility to play any way you like.

Say hello to my hot little friend

BROTHERS IN ARMS 2: GLOBAL FRONT HD

$7.99
Gameloft, brothersinarmsiphone.com

This intense World War II fighter stretches across five single-player campaigns in multiple theaters of operation, with impressive graphics, controllable vehicles, and historically accurate weaponry. Even better, local and online multiplayer lets you take on up to five friends in Domination, Team Deathmatch, and Free for All modes on five different maps.

Want more? For FREE!

FREE GAMES

10 FREE GAMES

WARM UP YOUR FINGERS FOR SOME SERIOUS IPAD GAMING, OR KEEP YOUR KID BUSY WITHOUT SPENDING ANY MONEY—THESE 10 GAMES ARE FREE IN THE APP STORE.

01 **WE RULE** *werule.ngmoco.com*
lets you build a Farmville-esque kingdom—farming, expanding, running a business, and of course, redecorating.

02 **TAP TAP RADIATION** *tapulous.com/taptapradiation*
comes with 30 free tracks in four difficulty levels for you to tap to the beat; you can purchase more in-game.

03 **GODFINGER FOR IPAD** *godfinger.ngmoco.com*
is a tiny world you control with your all-powerful finger(s), while its adorably wee inhabitants react to your benevolence or smitings.

04 **WARPGATE HD FREE** *freeverse.com/warpgate*
is a free taste of Freeverse's space-combat and intergalactic commerce game, but fun on its own for the unique controls and gorgeous graphics.

05 **IMAHJONG HD** *jirpo.com*
leaves out the bells and whistles in favor of serene tile-matching solitaire suitable for screen-tappers of any age.

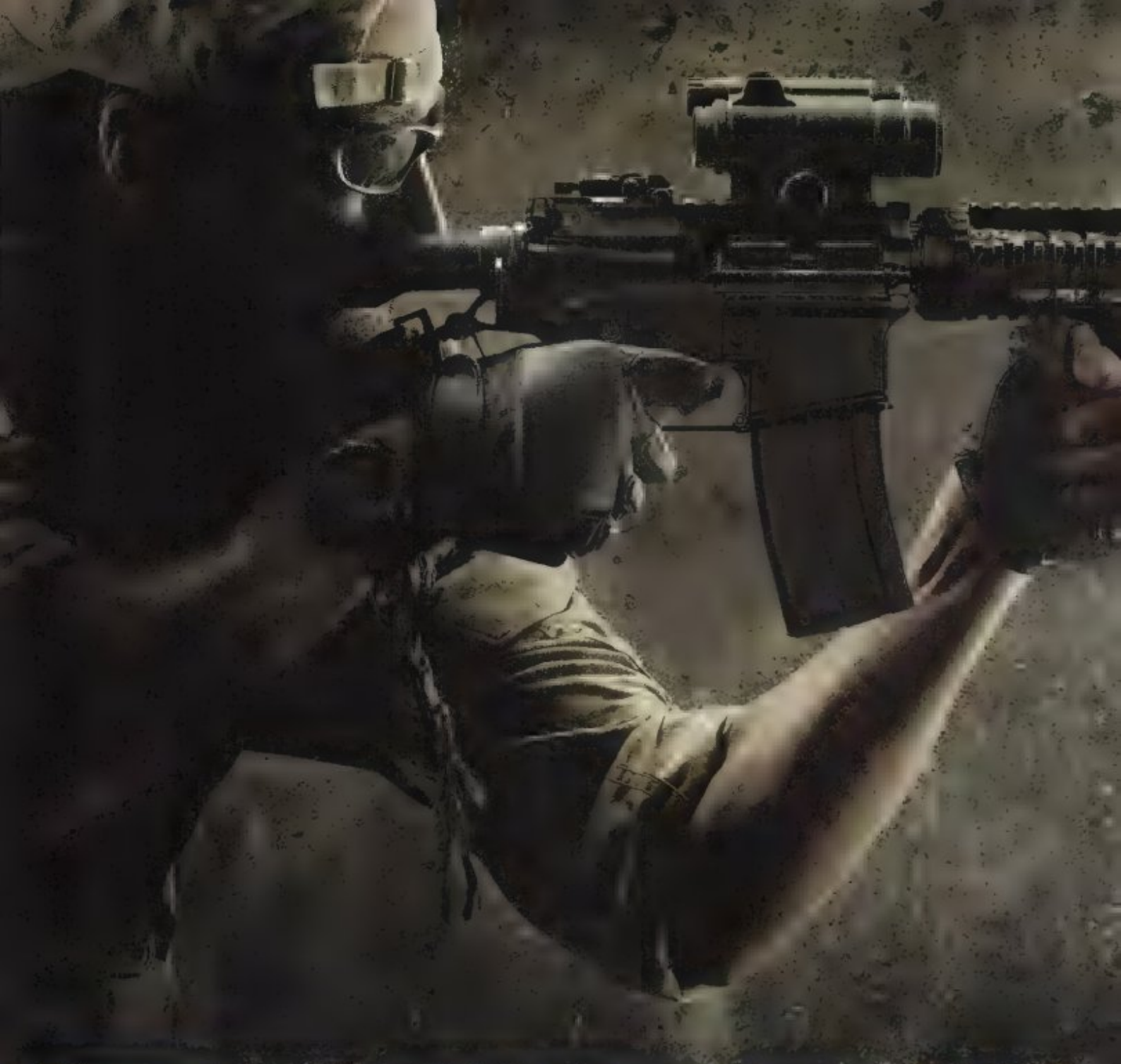
06 **HIT TENNIS 2** *focusedapps.com*
has you flick your finger on the screen to whack tennis balls, either against the computer or a friend on the other side of the iPad.

07 **POCKET LEGENDS FOR IPAD** *pocketlegends.com*
drops a full 3D MMO right in your lap, complete with quests, combat, friends, a fun story, and cute, cartoony fantasy-themed graphics.

08 **DIZZYPAD HD** *nimblebit.com/games/dizzypadhd*
puts you in charge of a cute frog leaping between lily pads, over serene water effects, but only comes with one mode unlocked—the others are $1.99 each.

09 **COMPRESSION HD** *littlewhitebearstudios.com*
kicks match-three puzzles up a notch by shrinking the game board as you play—talk about pressure.

10 **AIR HOCKEY GOLD** *accelerato.com/airhockey*
brings back memories of dimly lit arcades. Flick the puck around against the computer or a friend, either facing off on one iPad or over Bluetooth.



WIELD THE POWER OF BIG ARMY

JOIN THE ELITE AS A TIER 1 OPERATOR

DOMINATE DICE MULTIPLAYER

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
May contain content inappropriate for children. Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.

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XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE

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PS3

DICE MULTIPLAYER

BEST BUY

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CALENDAR

EVENTS

MIDNIGHT OPENINGS:

STARCRAFT 2
On-Sale Date: July 27

Check:
www.bestbuy.com/gamingevents

BEST BUY

JULY 2010

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Weds.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
				01 Dragon's Lair arcade game released in 1983	02	03
04 INDEPENDENCE DAY Yay! USA!	05	06 CRACKDOWN 2 SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: Persona 3 Portable	07	08	09 The TRON arcade game released in 1982	10
11 DRAGON QUEST IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	12	13 NCAA FOOTBALL 11	14	15 Xbox LIVE reaches one million subscribers in 2004	16	
18 WIL'S BIRTHDAY! 21 Again! Yay! CHUCK'S BIRTHDAY! Finally legal!	19	20 NEED FOR SPEED WORLD ONLINE BLAZBLUE: Continuum Shift TRACKMANIA	21	22		
25	26	STARCRAFT II: 27	28	29		

SEE PAGE 34!

ALL GAME NAMES ARE RELEASE DATES. LISTINGS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.

MIDNIGHT OPENINGS:

MADDEN 11
On-Sale Date: August 10

Doors open at 12:01am. Be the first to get in line for midnight

Check:
www.bestbuy.com/gamingevents

BEST BUY

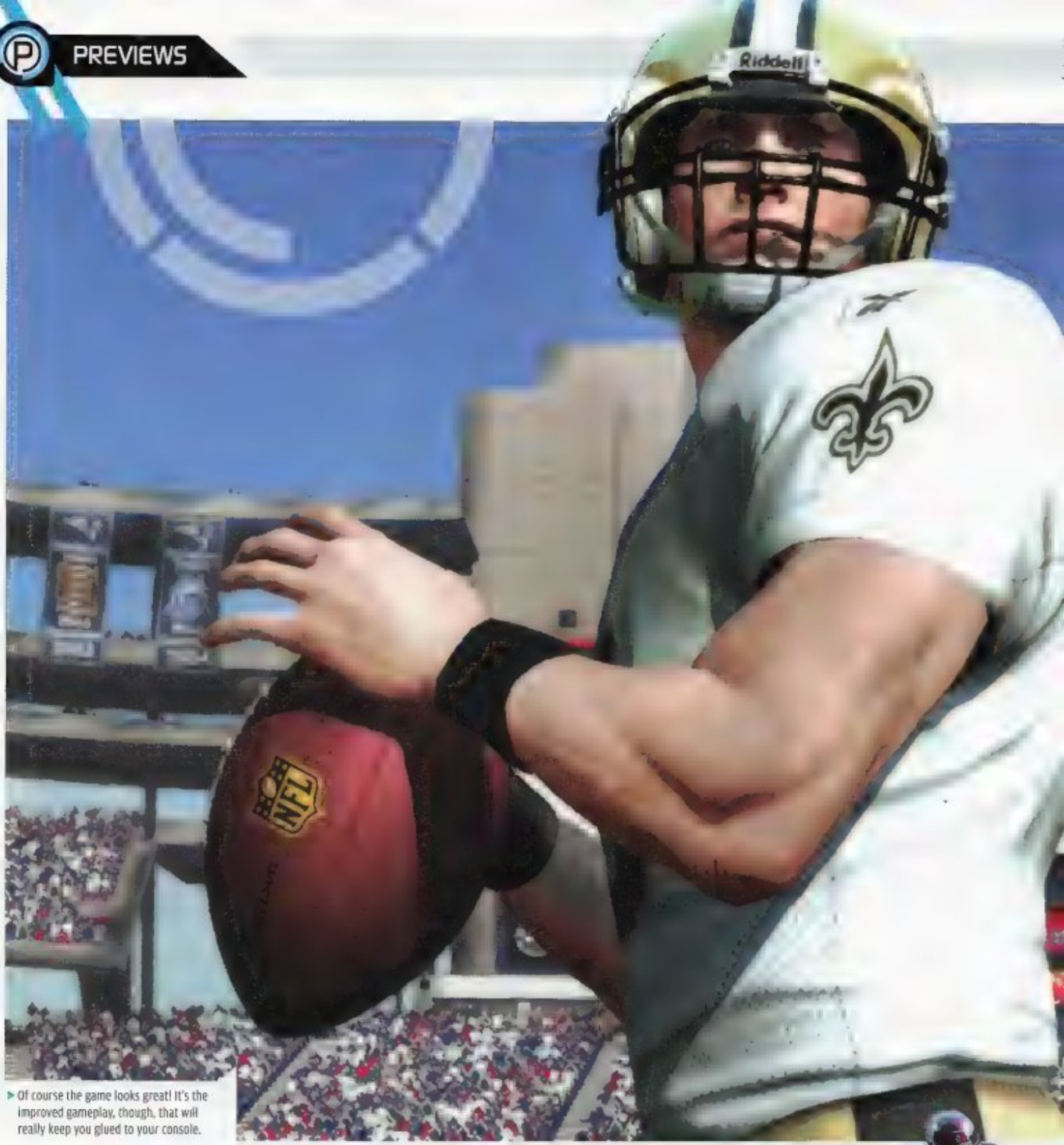
AUGUST 2010

Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Weds	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.
		03 DISNEY SING IT: Family Hits	04	05	06	07
08	09 Mortal Kombat arcade game released in 1992	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21 Nintendo launches Virtual Boy in 1995. It's discontinued the following year
22	23	24 MAFIA II KANE & LYNCH 2: Dog Days	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

SEE PAGE 24!

SEE PAGE 40!

ALL GAME NAMES ARE RELEASE DATES. LISTINGS SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE



▶ Of course the game looks great! It's the improved gameplay, though, that will really keep you glued to your console.

PS3 XBOX 360 Wii

GAME DETAILS

EVERYONE E ESRB

MADDEN NFL 11

INFO
Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Sports
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to four players

GENRE
Sports

RELEASE DATE
August 10, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Football junkies who are jonesing for a fix.

MADDEN NFL 11

The king of the digital gridiron returns with new talent and gameplay tweaks • Words: William O'Neal

The months between the Super Bowl and the beginning of football season are the worst time of the year for football fans. This year in particular has been one of the toughest on record. It's been so bad, in fact, that we were forced to endure countless hours watching the Scouting Combine, the NFL Draft, and reading every half-baked blog and Twitter post that included the words #football or #nfl. Thank God for *Madden NFL 11*.

Quite possibly the methadone for this NFL junkie, I get heart palpitations and the shakes in anticipation of each new season's iteration. Before I go any further, I feel compelled to preface this preview with a confession: I love the *Madden NFL* series. Even in those years when EA Sports messed things up (anyone remember *Madden NFL 06*?), I still found myself putting in countless hours. Of course, being a Raiders fan, I'm used to my football experiences being less than perfect...but I digress.

While non-football fans decry each *Madden* release as nothing more than just roster updates, those of us who play the game year in and year out know that it's about more than that. Like any sports franchise, during the offseason the *Madden NFL* team tweaks the game in an attempt to improve upon the previous year's entry. Some years, the running game is tweaked to near perfection, only to have the passing game tweaked to such a degree that hardcore fans give up on passing altogether. Having spent some time with the game, the mechanics of the basics—running, passing, blocking, and kicking—all seem to work really well. Where *Madden NFL 11* really differs from previous years, however, is in how the game feels.

EVOLUTION: OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

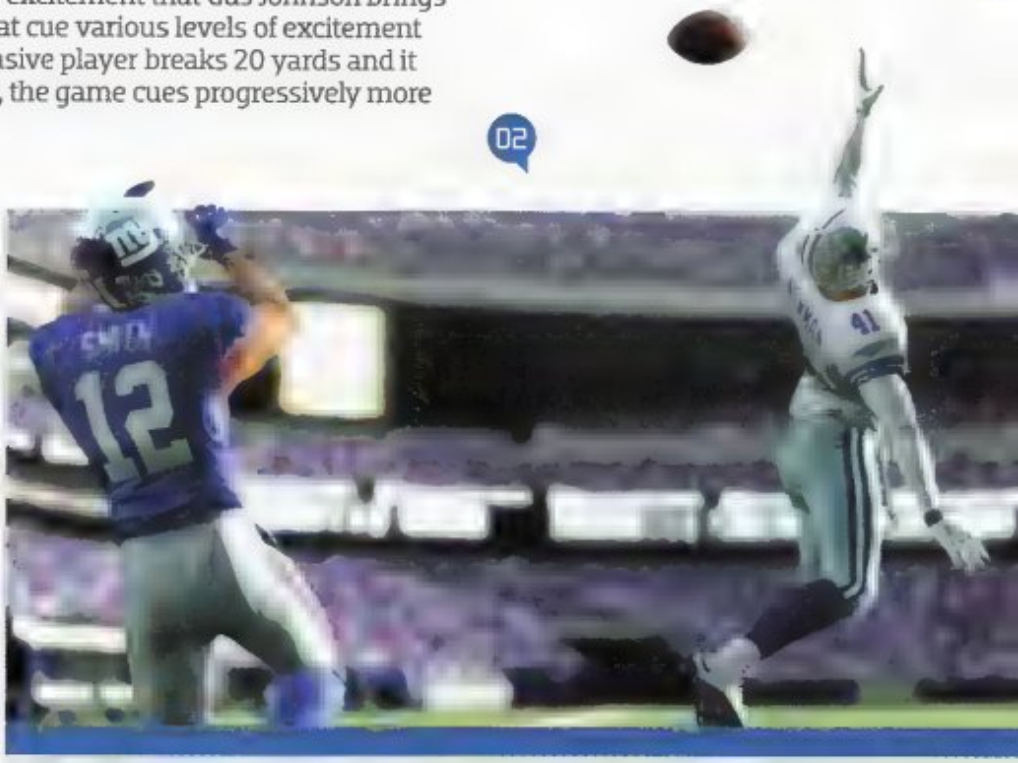
The Madden NFL team replaced veteran play-by-play man Tom Hammond with Gus Johnson. If you don't know who Gus Johnson is, search for some clips on YouTube. The Madden team felt that Tom Hammond's stoic in-game calls didn't accurately reflect the excitement on the field. For instance, if Frank Gore breaks an 80-yard touchdown, the announcer should be losing his mind. And this is the kind of excitement that Gus Johnson brings to the game. The game has triggers that cue various levels of excitement based on what's happening. If an offensive player breaks 20 yards and it looks like no one is going to catch him, the game cues progressively more excited reactions from Gus.

01 SPECIAL TEAMS

In years past, they've played around with the kicking mechanics. This year, kicking is relatively simple, leaving you to focus on the fun stuff!

02 GOT GAME?

Needless to say, the graphics in *Madden NFL 11* are amazing. Everything from player animations to pre-game hype is truly impressive.



PLATFORMS: THE DIFFERENCES

PS3
For old-school Madden fans, there's nothing like the PlayStation controller. In fact, some players are so diehard about this that they'll never play Madden on anything other than the PS3.

XBOX 360
Madden looks so good on the Xbox 360 that it's hard to knock it. Add to that the Xbox 360's massive online community and you'll always find someone online to play against.

Wii
Playing Madden with the WiiMote, while decidedly different, is undoubtedly fun. If you're one of the six billion families on the planet that own a Wii, you'll have a great time with this title.

COORDINATOR HEADSET

Adding to the in-game experience is the Coordinator headset. Whether on offense or defense, the coordinator will keep abreast of what's happening on the field and what your current situation is.

ANDY SAYS:

The addition of Online Pass may be in *Tiger 11* first, but it will probably be more of a concern for the big Madden audience. It seems like it'll affect casual and rental players more, which may be a large number of people.

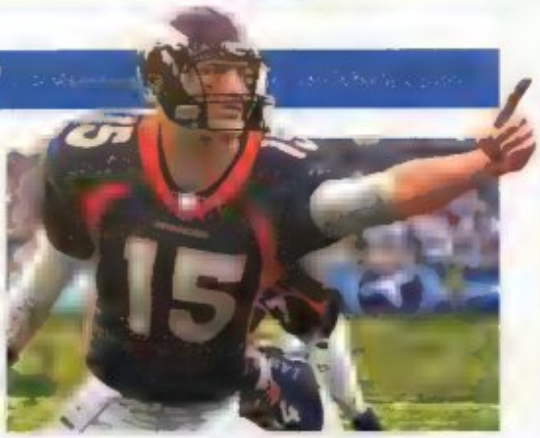
WHAT'S GREAT

- The new Gameflow makes for quicker games—and offers newer players some helpful play-selection advice.
- Changes to the gameplay commentary should make a big play "feel" more exciting.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT

- We'll need some time with the final version of *Madden 11* to determine if this year has any deficiencies and hope that, if one comes up, it won't hurt the gameplay too badly.

GAME PLAY: GAMEFLOW IS KEY



Another significant change is Gameflow. The *Madden* developers realize that in spite of the fact that most teams' playbooks are immense, players pretty much use the same few plays. The way Gameflow works is that with each down, the game will suggest a play based on your style, your team's playbook, and the situation. This new feature definitely quickens the pace of a game: In previous years, a game would take about an hour, but under Gameflow, you can play a complete game in about 30 minutes.

On defense, I chose the Gameflow option about half of the time. The other times I would audible at the line of scrimmage and choose a blitz. Likewise, on offense, I chose Gameflow about half the time, choosing to audible when I just felt like going deep or passing in what is typically a running situation.

MAFIA II

There is no Mafia...except in video games • Words: Tom Price

Mafia was an intriguing game, but not a successful one with critics or gamers when it came out in 2004. Mimicking the basic formula behind "open world" games like Grand Theft Auto, *Mafia* set its do-anything, shoot-anything crime drama in a more classic era of gangster lore, a rust-belt city of the 1930s. The sequel, *Mafia II*, only shifts a few years into the future, to the prosperous era (for both legitimate and criminal businesses) of the '40s and '50s. But from the ground up, it seems like a whole new game.

The type of gameplay behind *Mafia II* is also sometimes referred to as "sandbox-style" in the sense that gamers get of playing in a giant sandbox, doing almost anything they want to do. In *Mafia II*, you can do what you want, but you're also taking part in a story that's full of drama, action, sex, and lots and lots of bullets. Sure, driving around an enormous, era-appropriate city in cool old cars, shooting up rival gangs with your tommy gun, hijacking cigarette shipments, and stealing other people's cars is fun, but it does have a purpose.

You play as Vito, a young Italian-American on leave from the war after being hurt in action. Once back in Empire Bay, you reconnect with your old pal from the neighborhood, Joe, who is, shall we say, "connected." You soon find yourself drawn into this underworld, and before you know it, climbing your way up the ladder. Themes of loyalty, betrayal, greed, and romance pervade the epic tale.

An entirely new experience from its predecessor, *Mafia II* also looks significantly better, sporting the latest 3D graphics that developers can squeeze out of the current generation of consoles and bleeding-edge PC technology. You'll not just see it in the way the game looks, but in the way it falls apart; *Mafia II*'s physics technology allows for realistic damage in both cars and buildings. When you get in a wild gunfight, the environment around you will reflect the devastation in great detail.

Whether you crave a new open-world shooter or really love the classic era of organized crime, *Mafia II* should be an appealing game to play when it comes out this August for the PS3, Xbox 360, and PC.

IN GAME

▲ Cover systems are almost ubiquitous in games these days, and *Mafia II* features one that's much improved over the original game. While in a gunfight, you can take cover behind hard surfaces, but beware of wooden barriers, because they can get shot up in front of you. Taking cover is only part of the added complexity of the combat system, with improved friendly AI making it possible to flank and create crossfires with your gangster buddies. Guess Vito's time in the army wasn't a complete waste.

CITY BY THE BAY

Mafia II features a brand-new locale known as Empire Bay. Covering 10 square virtual miles, Empire Bay is not technically a real place, but an amalgamation of various U.S. cities, specifically how they looked in the '40s and '50s. New York is probably the biggest inspiration, but thanks to all of the real estate covered in that 10 square miles, what you can really count on seeing is a diversity of environments from downtown areas, to country roads, to suburban neighborhoods, and more.

LAWS OF PHYSX

Games aren't just looking better these days, they're also moving and reacting better, thanks to the realistic physics modeling afforded by Nvidia's PhysX technology. Without getting too technical, the technology allows you to destroy everything in your environment in realistic ways, from splintering wood to shattering glass, with resultant debris persisting. Not only will you see this advanced physics modeling in the destructible environments, but also in the way clothes drape and move on some of the main characters. Gotta make those classic trench coats look good.

PS3 XBOX 360 PC

GAME DETAILS

MATURE 17+ M ESRB

MAFIA II

INFO
Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: 2K Czech
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single player only

GENRE
Action Shooter

RELEASE DATE
August 24, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Lovers of crime dramas, action games, and gunplay.

WIL SAYS:

Being multi-platform gamers, we're not necessarily wedded to one platform versus another. Despite that, we're stoked that *Mafia II* benefits from Nvidia's PhysX technology on the PC. SLI, anyone?

WHAT'S GREAT:
- The whole gangster genre has made for some great movies and television shows. Here's hoping *Mafia II* can live up to the hype.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Hopefully, *Mafia II* won't be another *GTA* clone.

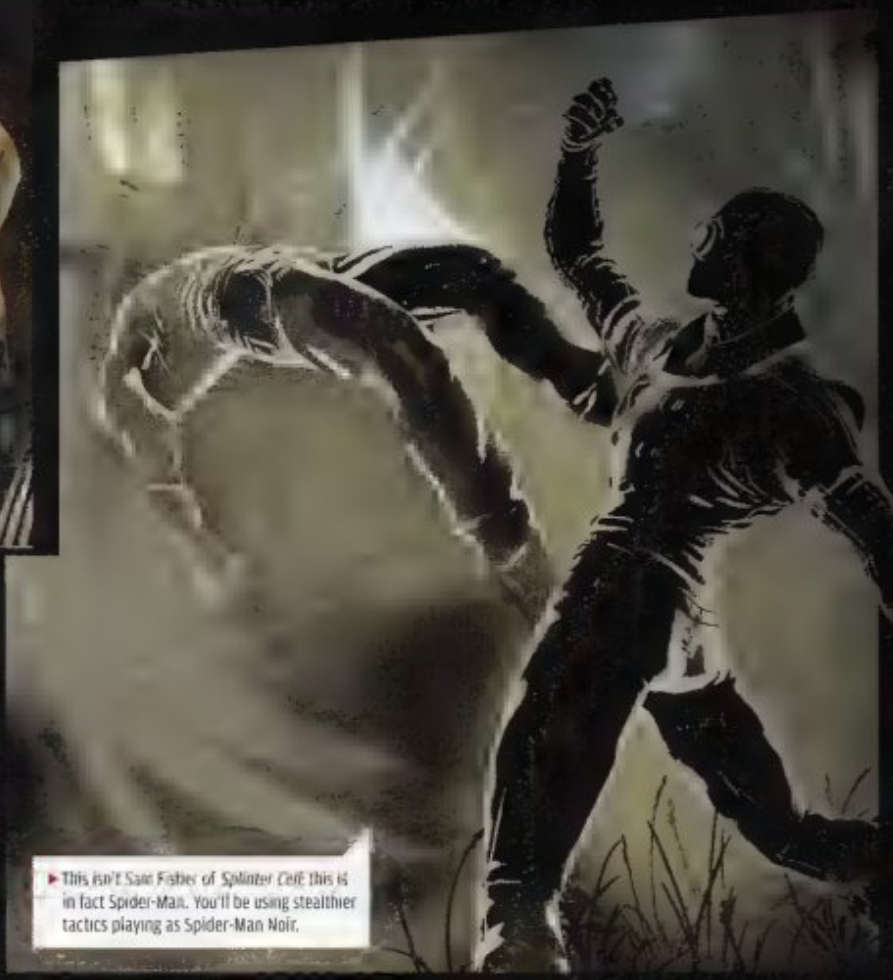
Want to prepare for *Mafia II*? Try *Grand Theft Auto IV*. It's a huge sandbox-style crime adventure!

SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

One game. Four Spider-men. Words: Evan Shamoon

WEB OF WORDS

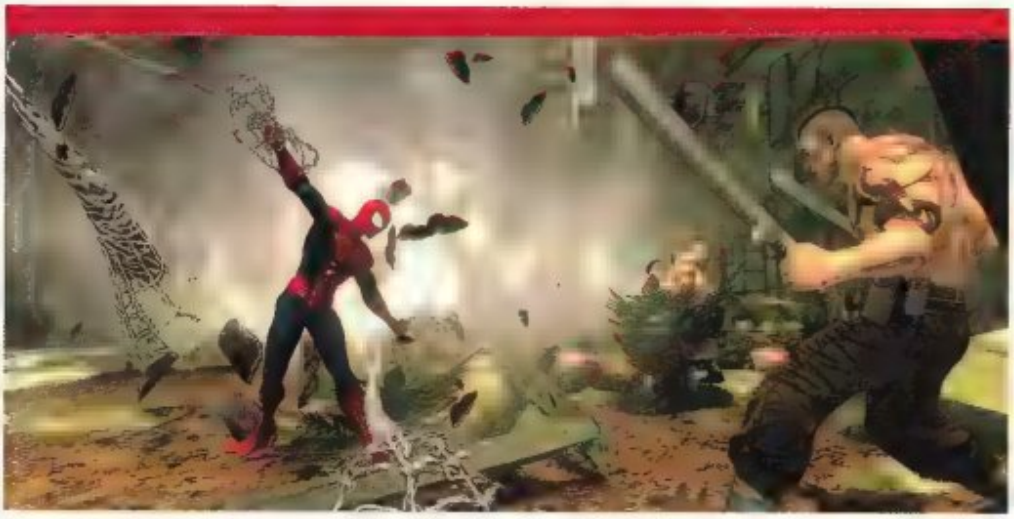
Activision called on famed Spider-Man comic writer Dan Slott (Amazing Spider-Man, Avengers: The Initiative, Ren and Stimpy, Justice League Adventures) to pen Shattered Dimensions' story. It goes a little something like this: Spider-Man accidentally shatters something called the Tablet of Order and Chaos during an epic battle with one of his foes, and the tablet is scattered across the four different universes. Because the tablet holds the balance of these diverse universes together, Spidey must seek out the pieces to restore the tablet and bring back order. And that's where you come in with a little bit of the "Sock! Pow!" to make things right.



▶ This isn't Sam Fisher of *Splinter Cell* this is in fact Spider-Man. You'll be using stealthier tactics playing as Spider-Man Noir.

ENEMY ORDERS

Enemies in Shattered Dimensions take a slightly different approach to stopping you dead in your tracks than they have in Spidey games past, thanks to a new system implemented by the developer. Essentially, there's a line of command: Frontline soldiers move in formation and are ordered around by their commander, a generally bigger, badder dude who sits back and attempts to organize them with attack strategies. Commanders will often use ranged attacks to do their damage from a distance while buffered by their legions of minions, forcing you to rethink your own strategy as well.



XBOX 360 PS3 Wii DS

GAME DETAILS

SPIDER-MAN: SHATTERED DIMENSIONS

INFO
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Beenox
Platforms: Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, DS

MULTPLAYER/ONLINE
Single-player only

GENRE
Action/Adventure

RELEASE DATE
Fall 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Spider-Man fans who want a little stealth with their web-slinging.

It's no easy task reinventing Spider-Man, but Activision and up-and-coming developer Beenox have done just that. How, you ask? By unearthing several past comic iterations of the web slinger, and weaving them together to create something new. *Shattered Dimensions* is essentially four Spidey experiences in one: a cell-shaded, action-heavy rendition of the Amazing Spider-Man, a stealth-centric interpretation of the Noir version, and two more interpretations that the studio hasn't revealed yet. Each will feature its own unique art style, a unique rendition of Spider-Man, and gameplay mechanics specific to its setting.

The first thing you notice upon jumping into the initial portion of the game, based on the Amazing Spider-Man comics, is just how well the creators have captured the superhero's look and feel. The cel-shaded graphics are superb, using a slightly washed-out, pen-and-ink style to capture the comic, and buttery-smooth animation that approximates the movement of a high-quality cartoon as well as any game we've ever laid eyes on. Action in these levels is fast-paced and chaotic, with dozens of enemies looking to take you out at all times. Expect lots of punching, kicking, and Spidey noogies. You'll combo and web-sling your way through lush jungle environments ("somewhere outside the confines of New York City," according to the developer), using sheer force and dexterity to progress; at the end, you'll go up against the level's supervillain, Kraven the Hunter (from issue #15 of the comic, for you superfans). You can use webs to pick up objects, pull out chunks of earth to use as weapons, and more.

Next up is Spider-Man Noir (based on the comic of the same name), which brings stealth mechanics, grittier graphics, and a darker storyline to the mix. While not exactly Sam Fisher in spandex, you'll need to use the element of surprise as you perch above enemies to perform drop-down attacks, and generally spend more time creeping through the shadows to remain undetected than laying waste to all and sundry. Unlike the past several interactive iterations of Spider-Man, *Shattered Dimensions* is entirely level-based: there's no open-world exploration, but rather a more linear, more precisely controlled experience—a structure well-suited to the range of gameplay styles at work.

Each iteration of Spider-Man will be voiced by a separate actor; Noir Spider-Man, for example, is voiced by Christopher Daniel Barnes, who played the superhero in the '90s FOX cartoon. You can, however, expect parity across the consoles: Beenox is developing the game using propriety technology that allows it to export virtually identical PS3, Xbox 360, and Wii versions when it releases this Fall.

READY FOR HIS CLOSE UP

Take a look at the world through Spidey's eyes

Brand new to *Shattered Dimensions* are a series of first-person sequences scattered throughout the game, which allow Spidey to get up-close and personal with his mortal enemies for the first time in the series. As a high-flyer, he's often pretty small on the screen in games, due to the need for the camera to keep up with him and his web-swinging antics. These first-person sequences therefore come as a nice change of pace, and allow the developers to play with the history of the characters and advance the story through dialogue.

WIL SAYS:

As a child of the '80s, I'd be lying if I said I didn't collect comics. That said, it's nice to see a game that's true to the look and feel of the original comics that I spent so much paper-route money collecting. I also really like the whole four-games-in-one concept. And Spider-Man Noir is just too cool.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Curmudgeons like me will welcome the fact that this version doesn't have the stink of Tobey Maguire.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- While we understand the reason behind the linear level structure, some open-world exploration would have been a welcome addition.

PC

GAME DETAILS

CITY OF HEROES: GOING ROGUE

INFO
Publisher: NCsoft
Developer: Paragon Studios
Platforms: PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Hundreds of players at the same time.

GENRE
Action MMO

RELEASE DATE
Summer 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Armchair superheroes who appreciate both good and evil.

CITY OF HEROES: GOING ROGUE

Sometimes, bad guys want to be good...and good guys, bad • Words: Andy Eddy

NCsoft and Paragon Studios have decided to take their *City of Heroes/City of Villains* game and make some major changes to it—not that they haven't added to and grown the game substantially over its six-year history. While previous expansions to the series have been free and downloadable, the forthcoming *Going Rogue* will be a boxed add-on available on retail shelves. Given the upgrades that they're providing, it's no surprise.

The main change is that they'll enable you to change your character's alignment. Where previously, you could opt to be a Hero or a Villain, now you'll be able to shift alignment at will. If, let's say, you're a Hero, you'll be able to move to a "tween" alignment of Vigilante, then make the full change to Villain; and if you're a Villain, you'll move through Rogue status on your way to becoming a Hero. It really opens up the content to players, but more importantly, a character can be evolved in shades of gray—sometimes good, sometimes bad, much like Marvel and DC Comics do with their main superheroes.

For those who haven't romped in the *City of Heroes/Villains* world (or those who may be returning after a long hiatus), *Going Rogue* will feature a new tutorial that'll better guide the player through creating a character, control basics, and combat. The start in Praetoria (the game's new zone) gradually leads you to commit your character path to good or evil—Loyalist or Resistance. The expansion also adds four new power sets, such as Dual Pistols—and pre-ordering *Going Rogue* will get you access to two of them now (check your local store for details).

On a technical level, *Going Rogue* also features vast visual improvements. In a recent demo, the Paragon team showed me how much realistic reflection has been added to pools, puddles, and even windows. It seems like the $30 price for the expansion (or $40 if you want both *City of* titles in full along with *Going Rogue*) will be well worth it.

Hero Worship
You'll be able to customize your character's appearance as elaborately as you'd like.

THERE'S A MORAL(ITY) TO THE STORY

Going Rogue enables you to shift from Hero to Villain or vice versa, though there's some effort—and proof of commitment—to transition: It takes nine "alignment missions" and a "morality mission," which is a last step confirming that you want to become the next alignment, to shift toward any given status (Hero, Villain, Rogue, or Vigilante). For example, a Hero shifting toward Villain needs to complete ten missions to become a Rogue first. It's interesting that, as a Rogue or Vigilante, you'll be able to participate in either Hero or Villain missions—at least, until you decide to take it the rest of the way to one of your character's extremes or the other.

▲ The game's graphics engine has been rewritten, and one result is that characters cast shadows that are more accurate relative to their body shape.

▲ Nighttime give your powers some added visual pop, and you can customize the aura's color to your personal liking.

WIL SAYS:

The original *City of Heroes* was plenty of fun. That said, I'm not sure that players will be willing to pony up the cash when there are other free-to-play MMO hero games available.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- If you like comics you'll no doubt be stoked to have another comic book-based game to play.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Players of the original series will bemoan having to pay for this boxed add-on content.

▼ Welcome to your chance to put lots of exotic sports cars through the wringer.

NEED FOR SPEED WORLD ONLINE

@GAMER pops the hood on EA's online driving game • Words: Andy Eddy

PC

GAME DETAILS

NEED FOR SPEED WORLD ONLINE

INFO
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: EA Black Box/ EA Singapore
Platforms: PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Massively Multiplayer

GENRE
Online Driving/Racing

RELEASE DATE
Fourth-Quarter 2010

SUITABLE FOR:
Racers looking to prove themselves to their friends.

The *Need for Speed* series, which debuted way back in 1994, has always been about driving cool cars in ultra-competitive races. *Need for Speed World* takes that core theme and puts it into a multiplayer online world where budding racers can test their skills against other human drivers.

As with previous *Need for Speed* games, players are given access to some of the most exciting licensed cars around, which can be fully customized to create a unique ride, and driven in a variety of competitive racing activities.

Solo players have the option to race offline against AI opponents, try their luck at Pursuit (trying to escape from a computer-controlled police pursuit) or simply Explore the more than 100 miles of road within the game. Where the competitive element of this game really shines, though, is in its online multiplayer mode, which enables players to race against one another.

Adding an RPG-style twist to the gameplay, *Need for Speed World* awards Reputation Points to successful players, which can be used to boost your driver's attributes and unlock new skills. You can also collect power-ups that grant car-enhancing features such as longer nitrous duration, better performance when you're down in the standings, or being able to see police car locations on your map.

The coolest part of *Need for Speed World* is that it will be free to play—at least for the basics. You'll be able to get up to a certain level without paying, although if you want to purchase power-ups (outside of acquiring them through driving) or try out a new vehicle, you'll have to buy currency—called Speed Boost.

Expected to be out before the end of the year, *Need for Speed World* is currently being beta tested. If you want to find out more about it, or indeed sign up to be a beta tester, check out world.needforspeed.com.

EA'S FIRST ONLINE LAPS

This isn't EA's first try at bringing out a "massively multiplayer driving game." In 2001, *Motor City Online* was launched, which let players to engage in high-speed racing action with old '50s style rides. Players could buy and sell vehicles within the game, and those who found the perfect set-up for a particular track could fetch a pretty penny for their auctioned rides. Despite its appeal, in the end, the game didn't sustain an audience and was shut down in 2003.

WIL SAYS:

While RPGs are surely popular, the idea of running around some fictional land casting spells with dwarves, mages, and...well...you get the picture, doesn't appeal to me. Which is why *Need for Speed World* is more my thing. Being able to trick out a virtual car and test it out is awesome.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- ❤ This is EA's second stab at an automotive RPG. Hopefully, this time it will work out.
- ❤ We like cars.
- ❤ The pricetag of free is hard to argue with.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- ✖ EA's first stab at an automotive RPG crashed and burned.

STARCRAFT II: WINGS OF LIBERTY

The long-awaited sequel to the greatest real-time strategy game in the universe • Words: Alex Pete

There's no over-hyping how big Starcraft II: Wings of Liberty is going to be, not just in the United States, but across the globe. In South Korea, for instance, professional Starcraft players receive fat sponsorships and battle in televised matches. And like the original, Starcraft II will be a real-time strategy game with players commanding one of three warring factions. But there are so, so many more new features in store that are bound to hook new users and please diehard fans.

For the uninitiated, Starcraft came out back in 1998 to smashing commercial and critical success. What made it the gold standard for real-time strategy was a solid story, three very different, balanced races, and a robust multiplayer game where players must be strategically savvy. The insectoid and genocidal Zerg deploy organic structures and quickly reproduce overwhelming swarms. As the ancient, alien lore keepers, the Protoss use slower, more sophisticated technology such as warp capabilities, energy shields, and psionic power. Units of Terrans, or genetically and cybernetically enhanced humans, split the difference between the other two races, using more ballistic military tech, such as tanks and nuclear weapons.

The first in a trilogy, Starcraft II: Wings of Liberty includes the base game and a single-player campaign featuring the Terrans. The solo missions will continue the epic story where it left off in StarCraft: Brood War, chronicling the adventures of rebel-leader Jim Raynor. Players will choose their own path and select technology and research upgrades to suit their style through 29 missions. Several challenge-mode mini-games will also be included, with objectives that will help teach players the rudiments of multiplayer strategy.

Another purpose for the single-player campaigns is story development. Players choose a mission path and technology upgrades for their army as they advance through the campaigns. Deeper, sustained character development gives player decisions more impact. By the end, you'll have an intimate understanding of each faction's capabilities and philosophy. So, prepare to spend some quality and quantity time in the Starcraft universe this July.

TRIPLE PLAY

StarCraft II is subtitled Wings of Liberty and will include a lengthy single-player campaign that focuses on the Terrans. The next two expansion packs, tentatively titled Heart of the Swarm and Legacy of the Void, feature deep single-player experiences with the Protoss and Zerg, respectively. Each expansion has 25–30 new missions and includes new units, abilities, structures, and maps, but from the start, players will be able to engage in multiplayer contests using any of the three races.

▼ PROTOSS BUILDING

▼ This isn't *Starcraft* circa 1998. This latest version looks absolutely amazing.

PC

GAME DETAILS

TEEN T ESRB

STARCRAFT II: WINGS OF LIBERTY

INFO
Publisher: Blizzard Entertainment
Platforms: PC, Mac

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Extensive multiplayer options

RELEASE DATE
July 27, 2010

GENRE
Sci-fi real-time strategy

SUITABLE FOR:
RTS fans

GAMEPLAY

▲ This game is extremely deep. Technology upgrades enable players to really get into the nuts and bolts of character development

▲ Prepare to spend countless hours plodding through *Starcraft II*'s 29 missions.

WIL SAYS:

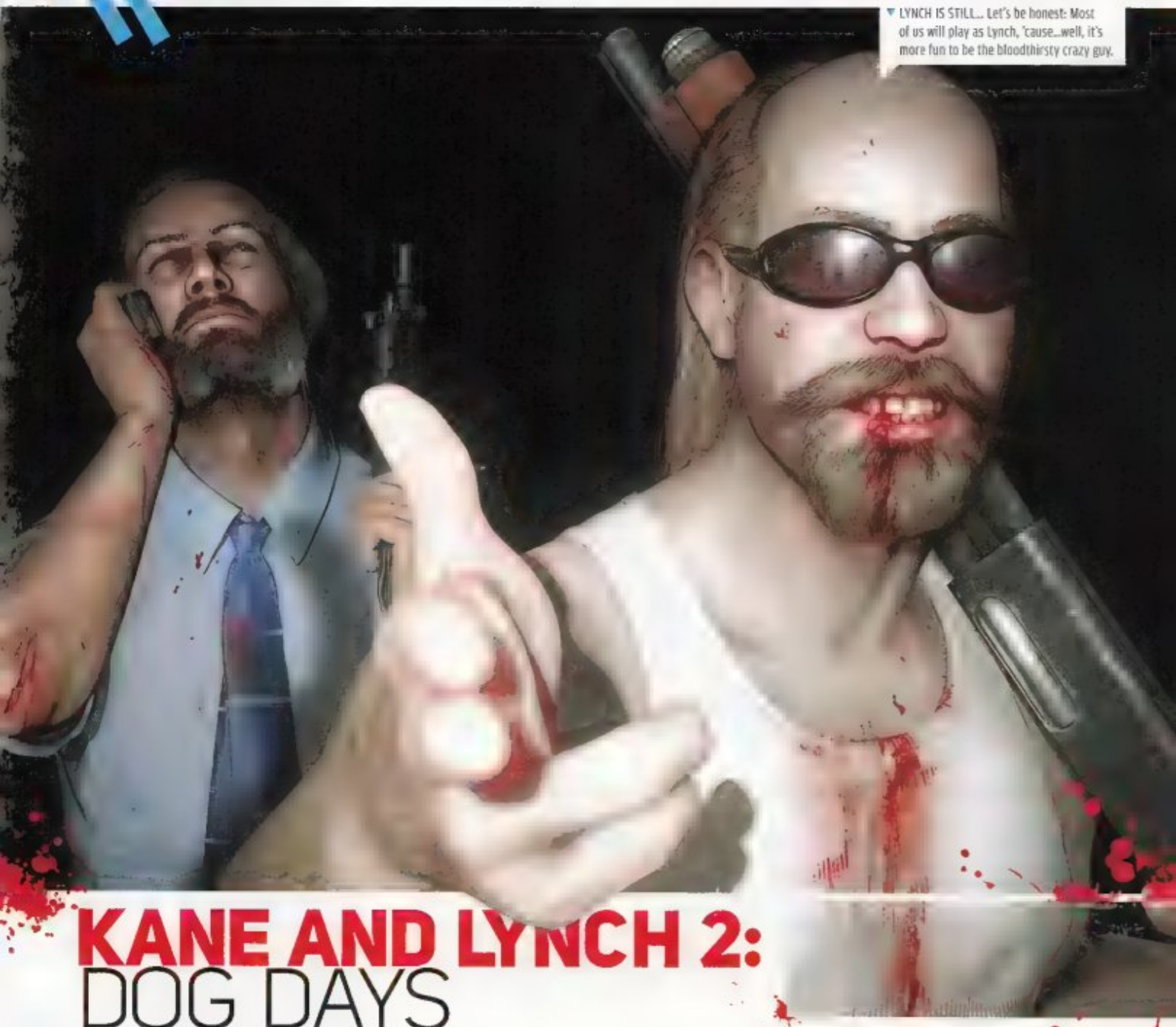
When Starcraft came out back in 1998, it took the gaming world by storm. One of the most popular real-time strategy games ever, this sequel should give hardcore RTS fans the world over something to get excited about.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- One of the most highly anticipated games of the year.
- If you didn't like the look of the original *Starcraft*, you'll love the way *Starcraft II* looks.
- Available for the Mac.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Why did Blizzard make us wait so long?

STARCRAFT BY THE NUMBERS

Starcraft's popularity resulted in Guinness World Records awarding the game four world records, including "Best Selling PC Strategy Game" (11 million copies to date), "Largest Income in Professional Gaming" ($250,000 annual salary), and "Largest Audience for a Game Competition" when 120,000 fans turned out to watch the final of the SKY proleague season 2005 in Busan, South Korea. For good measure, Starcraft has even been the subject of an academic course at UC Berkeley, and astronaut Daniel Barry took a copy of the game with him on the Space Shuttle mission STS-96 in 1999.



▼ LYNCH IS STILL... Let's be honest: Most of us will play as Lynch, 'cause...well, it's more fun to be the bloodthirsty crazy guy.

KANE AND LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

Innovative multiplayer options help this sequel deliver some good, old-fashioned backstabbing fun • Words: William O'Neal

The original *Kane and Lynch: Dead Men* had a lot of promise: a shooting game featuring a pair of somewhat crazy characters and a storyline that felt almost like a classic 80's Hollywood buddy-buddy action movie. However, while it was fun wreaking havoc with the militaristically sound Kane and his psychopathic sidekick Lynch, it unfortunately didn't quite gel into a fully cohesive gaming experience.

Realizing that despite *Dead Men*'s flaws, it still had a lot of good things going for it, developer IO Interactive went back to the drawing board to try to address the issues that plagued the first game while also adding some additional goodies.

The result of their endeavors is *Kane and Lynch 2: Dog Days*, which takes place in modern-day Shanghai where, after a job goes horribly awry, the pair find themselves wanted by the entire Shanghai underworld. Of course, this gives Kane and Lynch the excuse to do all the kinds of things you expect them to do: robbing people, killing people, and robbing and killing people who just got finished robbing and killing other people. As in the original, Kane is the more methodical and slightly saner character, while Lynch is his same old psychopathic self.

While the single-player campaign seems to be a more refined version of the first game, the myriad of new multiplayer modes are where we think this game will really kick ass.

Dog Days' most promising mode is called "Fragile Alliance," a cooperative scenario where players work together to complete missions and escape with as much money as possible. Initially, there are just cops to contend with, but at some point your cohorts may decide to turn on you (or indeed you on them), and that makes for an interesting twist to the gameplay, because there are decisions to be made. Do you go for the big prize and take everyone out?

Or are you going to share your spoils? When the going gets too tough, will you use one of your buddies as a human shield as you try to escape? Or are you prepared to go out together in a blaze of glory? Just be warned—if you do turn on your friends, the game will brand you a traitor, and there will be consequences. But it certainly makes the gameplay plenty of fun!

To help players hone their skills before jumping in the mix with other real-world players, there's an Arcade Mode, which is basically a single-player version of Fragile Alliance. This is a nice idea and helps players learn the gameplay basics without putting them right into the line of fire, where they may end up inadvertently getting their friends killed.

The original Kane and Lynch held a lot of promise, so we're stoked that IO Interactive is giving it another shot. We're hoping that the lessons learned with the original, as well as the addition of some fun new gameplay tweaks, will have Kane and Lynch actually living up to its potential this time around.

IS THERE NO HONOR AMONG THIEVES?

The great thing about Fragile Alliance is being able to turn on your buddies and steal their loot. Be careful, though, because the game tells everyone who's the traitor. At least if one of your buddies kills you during a mission, you return in that same mission as a cop. Revenge is a dessert best served while wearing a blue uniform.

Expect to see these tense, angry glares on a regular basis—and be glad that since you're playing one of their characters, those glares won't be directed at you.

XBOX 360 PS3 PC

GAME DETAILS

KANE & LYNCH 2: DOG DAYS

INFO
Publisher: Eidos
Developer: IO Interactive
Platforms: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE:
Online Co-op

GENRE
Crime Shooter

RELEASE DATE
August 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Gamers who want a shooter that's easy to pick up and play, and has unique and compelling multiplayer options.

ANDY SAYS:

Despite the first game's weaknesses, it had a compelling partnership—*The Odd Couple, Criminal Edition*, if you will—that kept me playing more. That's the main reason I'll give *Dog Days* a try when it hits stores.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- If they're like the first game, the characters and story force you to care—you want to see Kane and Lynch get through it.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Some of the first game's battles were painfully drawn out; hopefully, that won't plague the sequel.

TWO WORLDS II

The second quest to defeat evil promises to improve on the first • Words: Andy Eddy

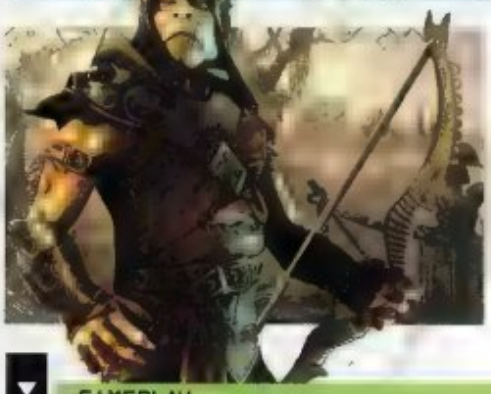
You might think you've ended up in Jurassic Park but thinking at this point is what will get you killed.

While the original *Two Worlds* was panned by many reviewers, some gamers swore by it (rather than at it). Interestingly enough, Poland-based developer Reality Pump was aware of the issues that many complained about, and instead of bringing out a second add-on for the initial game, decided that the roleplaying franchise would be better served by revamping and improving the technology under the hood. The company then moved to release it as a fresh standalone game—replete with better lighting, higher-quality reflections and more realistic-looking terrain. *Two Worlds II* features a playable universe that's close to 60 square kilometers—about 30% bigger than its predecessor—with about 40 hours of gameplay including side quests.

The sequel picks up five years after the events of the first game, and the unnamed hero is still hoping to find his twin sister, Kyra—something hard to do from the prison where the evil Gandohar is keeping him captive. The adventure takes a strange twist when orcs—fierce enemies in *Two Worlds*—free the hero, forging an odd alliance. Teaming with his former foes and defeating Gandohar (again) are his first priorities before he can return to his search for Kyra.

SouthPeak and TopWare hope *Two Worlds II*'s enormous multiplayer component will offer the biggest appeal. One element will be a separate cooperative campaign with about five to seven hours of gameplay—though mission replayability can stretch that. Some co-op missions, as well as the competitive PvP (player vs. player) portion, will support up to six players. And a "Village Mode" (currently a working name) will enable you to "grow your town" to produce better weapons and invite other players to visit, enabling them to benefit from your city's item-crafting. *Two Worlds II* sounds like a well-thought-out game that you may want to have on your wish list when its September due date rolls around.

Scenes like this show how much Reality Pump has done to improve Two Worlds II's visual appeal—though you won't have much of an opportunity to appreciate it until you take care of your new "friends."



GAMEPLAY

SHUFFLE UP AND DEAL DAMAGE

A new spell system, which enables you to use cards to create different attacks or combine others together, will be applauded by those wanting combat depth. By stacking spells, we saw how a single fireball changed into a wide fan comprised of multiple fiery projectiles, which delivered even more damage. Weapons and gear can also be "grown" by adding items to them—or you can disassemble them into their base elements, which can be recombined to improve the stats of other wares in your inventory.

POP GOES THE CULTURE

While *Two Worlds II* may be, "a fresh take on the medieval period" according to the developer, the gamemakers had a little bit of fun by burying some Easter Eggs in the game that pay tribute to more modern fare. We're curious to see how references to *Ghostbusters* and *The Goonies* will play out.

XBOX 360 PS3 PC

GAME DETAILS

TWO WORLDS II

INFO
Publisher: SouthPeak/TopWare
Developer: Reality Pump
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to six players in co-op and competitive gameplay

GENRE
Role-playing game

RELEASE DATE
September 14, 2010

SUITABLE FOR:
RPG players that like durable gameplay and some fresh ideas.

WIL SAYS:

With its enormous world, we look forward to getting lost in *Two Worlds II*. Add to that the game's promising multiplayer options, and we're thinking this sequel may be a winner.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- This isn't just an add-on, the game has been rebuilt from the ground up.
- *Two Worlds II* boasts an enormous world.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- *Two Worlds* doesn't rock the world's best pedigree. Here's hoping developer Reality Pump learned from their first go-around.

DEAD RISING 2

The best damn survival horror/comedy/action game—period

• Words: Alex Porter

In case you missed it, *Dead Rising* was a survival/horror game notable for intense, sometimes hilarious, action with massive swarms of undead—up to 600 onscreen at a time. This sequel, set in a Vegas-like location called Fortune City, features similar gameplay and a new protagonist. *Dead Rising 2* can now accommodate up to 8,000 flesh-eating undead shuffling around onscreen at one time, all ripe and ready to be taken out in some ridiculous and satisfying fashion.

DR2 takes place five years after the events of the original *Dead Rising*. Protagonist Chuck Greene, a former motocross champ, gets caught in the middle of the zombie apocalypse and must face not only the rotting hordes, but surviving psychos and citizens as well. Included among the survivors is Chuck's own daughter, Katey, now infected in an attack that killed her mother. Saving Katey keeps Chuck motivated as he tries to earn money to keep his daughter on the infection suppressant, "Zombrex."

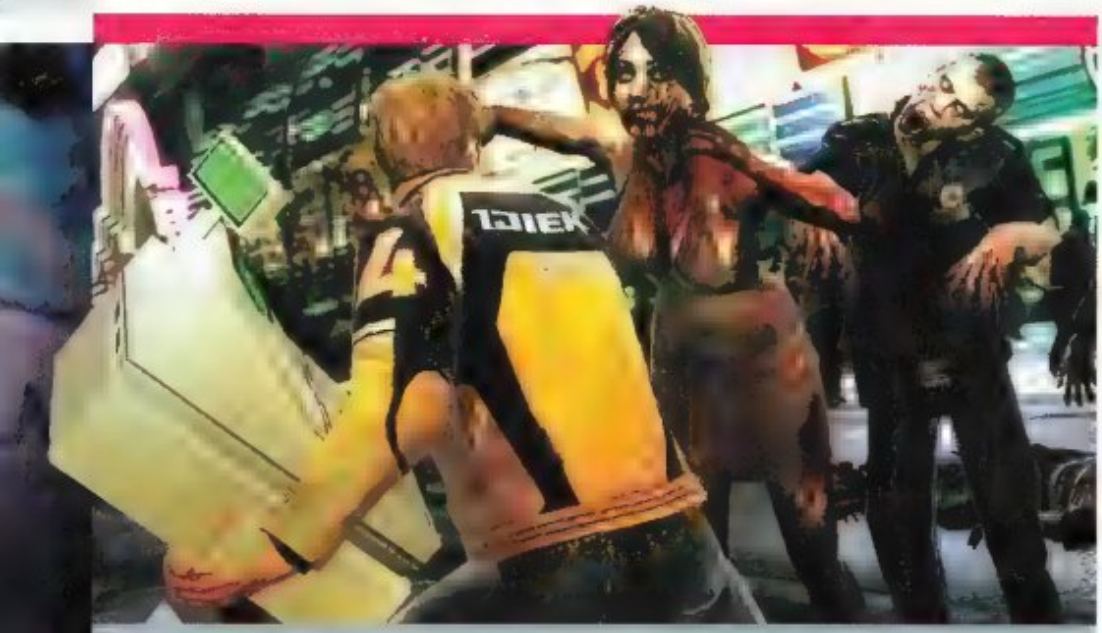
LET'S KILL SOME ZOMBIES!

Missions consist of Chuck battling the deadly swarms while accomplishing assorted goals. There are some light role-playing elements that involve resource management, as well. Players can purchase "cards" with tips on combining weapons to deadly effect. One example, called "Dynameat," consists of a stick of dynamite duct-taped to a chunk of human flesh. Chuck's skill as a mechanic comes in handy for assembling a vast array of these zombie-slaughtering machines like the "Paddlesaw" (two chainsaws connected by a kayak paddle), and the "Hail Mary" (a grenade strapped to a football). Other components of destruction include wheelchairs, machine guns, roulette wheels, cooking oil, stuffed animals, and on and on. It seems players can turn just about any available object into a weapon. Add the ability to purchase alternative outfits such as a showgirl costume or leather chaps and vest, and you've got real over-the-top comic action.

NOW WITH MULTIPLAYER

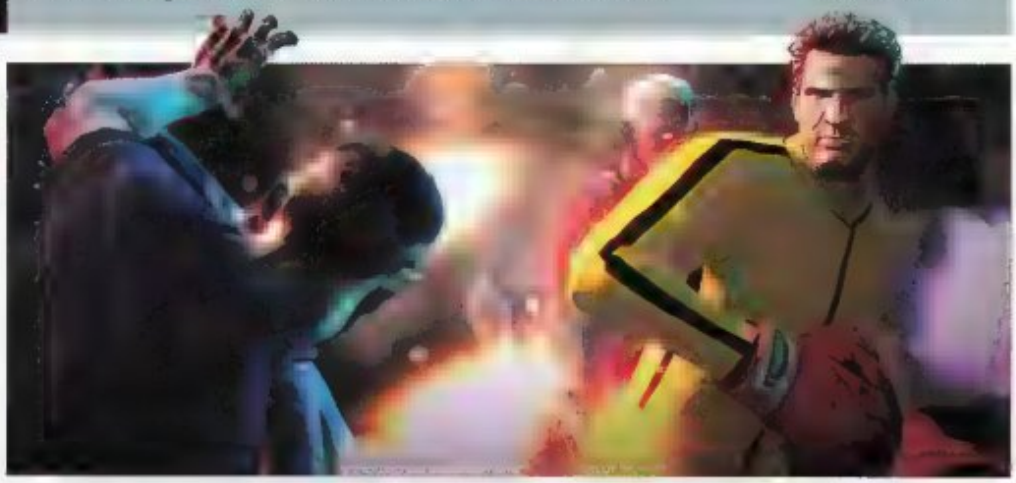
KILLING IS MORE FUN WITH FRIENDS.

DR2 now has—unlike the first game—multiplayer action. Modes include cooperative gameplay in the story campaign, and free-for-all participation for up to four players in a fictional reality game show called *Terror is Reality*, a sort of *American Gladiators* with zombies. Yep, there will be giant hamster balls and, more importantly, motorcycles equipped with chainsaws. In short, *Dead Rising 2* will offer enough variation to keep players coming back—with friends as well as solo—for gory, intense, and intensely fun action.



It seems players can turn just about any available object into a weapon. Here are some deadly (and wacky) favorites: roulette wheel, cooking oil, giant stuffed rabbit, bbq ribs, garbage can, wheelchair, beach ball, guitar, and swordfish. Combine several of these for an extra-potent cocktail of zombie obliteration.

Dead Rising 2 takes a real tongue-in-cheek approach to zombie killing. Boxing gloves? Really?



MINIGAMES GALORE!

▲ I'M THIRSTY
After a rousing day killing zombies, there's nothing like a nice cold beer.

▲ TWO GAMES IN ONE
Dead Rising 2 is about more than just killing zombies. You and your buddies can get around the mall on skateboards.

XBOX 360 PS3 PC

GAME DETAILS

MATURE 17+ M

DEAD RISING 2

INFO
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Blue Castle Games
Platforms: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Co-op and deathmatch

GENRE
Action

RELEASE DATE
August 2010

SUITABLE FOR:
Zombie killers.

WIL SAYS:

Some people like vampires and some people like zombies. And some people like killing both. If killing zombies is your thing, and you like a lot of gore to boot, then you'll no doubt dig *Dead Rising 2*.

WHAT'S GREAT:
❤ Now that the game has multiplayer options, it'll be fun to run around wreaking havoc with your buddies.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
✖ While killing zombies is plenty fun, it can get a little repetitive after a while.

METROID: OTHER M

Who wouldn't want to get up close and personal with Samus Aran? All will finally be revealed in *Metroid: Other M* • Words: Heather Barron

Wii

GAME DETAILS

METROID: OTHER M

INFO
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo and Team Ninja
Platforms: Wii

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
None

GENRE
Action

RELEASE DATE
August 31, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Anyone who loved previous *Metroid* games.

Other M aims to fill in the gap between *Super Metroid* and *Metroid Fusion*, and give us some insight as to what makes Samus, the series' protaganist, tick. After the death of Mother Brain and the destruction of Planet Zebes, Samus escapes only to find herself aboard a Galactic Federation ship.

Third-person perspective is the default view in *Other M*. By holding the Wii Remote NES-style you can blast away hordes of enemies to your heart's content. You can also point the controller at your TV to jump into first-person mode—the downside being that you're unable to move while in first-person view. Possibly a major snag, but this mode does enable you to get a closer look at nooks and crannies that could be housing hidden items, and let you aim more precisely with your arm cannon.

The idea of *Other M* attempting to evolve the *Metroid* series into a more story-heavy, cut-scene driven game may scare some, but with acclaimed developer Team Ninja on board, there is no denying the possibilities.

GAMEPLAY

▲ *Other M* will be a triumphant return to the side-scrolling days of early *Metroid* games. Without the limits of a 2D plane, it will offer the best of both 2D and 3D gameplay.

▲ Samus now has the ability to dole out some vicious killing blows. "Any objections, Lady?"

▲ Switch to first-person mode with the flick of your wrist to get up close and personal with the action or simply to scour a level for hidden power-ups.

WIL SAYS:

The *Metroid* franchise has been around for a long time, and while everyone who's ever played it knows all about the weapons and tech, *Other M* offers a rich backstory into Samus' mind and motivations.

WHAT'S GREAT
- Being able to jump into first-person mode.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT
- Movement is impaired while in first-person mode.

DEATHSPANK

...because there's not enough funny in games • Words: Wil O'Neal

Games don't always have to be a serious business. And it's in this vein that game designer Ron Gilbert (*The Secret of Monkey Island*) has created DeathSpank, an action RPG cross between *Monkey Island* and *Diablo*.

The game is simple enough: The protagonist is DeathSpank, described by developer Hothead Games as a "hero to the downtrodden, vanquisher of evil, and defender of justice." A lighthearted take on the sometimes serious world of RPGs, DeathSpank takes its hero on a quest to discover an artifact that is simply known as... "The Artifact." No stranger to comedy, Gilbert has added a touch of fun in that the game's would-be hero knows that he's destined for greatness without knowing what this greatness entails. Because of this, he lives his life in a ridiculously grandiose way. Every act, from killing a chicken to fetching a taco for the town's blacksmith, is wrought with gallantry—oftentimes a level of gallantry that belies the banality of the task at hand.

Available through Xbox Live Arcade and PlayStation Network, getting into DeathSpank isn't a huge commitment. Couple this with the game's relative simplicity and cool visual style, and we see no reason why gamers won't have fun helping DeathSpank as he rescues orphans, defeats bad guys, and collects loot.

XBOX 360 PS3

GAME DETAILS

DEATHSPANK

INFO
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Hothead Games
Platforms: Xbox Live Arcade, PlayStation Network

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Multiplayer co-op

GENRE
Action RPG

RELEASE DATE
July, 2010

SUITABLE FOR:
Anyone who loves hack-and-slashing with a side of humor.

THERE BE MONSTERS

▲ While *DeathSpank* is a lighthearted game, there are battles. And some of these bad guys mean business.

▲ The levels in *DeathSpank* range from the green and pretty to the downright dark and gloomy.

ANDY SAYS:

Ron Gilbert's games always have a twisted sense of humor, so I'm really looking forward to what he puts together with Deathspank. The name alone is funny enough.

WHAT'S GREAT

- Available through download only, *DeathSpank* won't set you back $50.
- The game is extremely accessible.

WHAT'S NOT

- Hardcore RPG fans might be put off by the game's tongue-in-cheek sensibility.

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

Activision goes searching for the heart of rock and roll • Words: Evan Shamoon

Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock is heavy—easily the heaviest Guitar Hero game to date. "Collectively, we thought the first three Guitar Hero games really captured the 'soul' of rock music," says Activision's project lead Brian Bright. While Guitar Hero 4 and 5 were both fun and polished, he says, the goal with this newest iteration was to return to the je ne sais rawk that those earlier games captured. Don't expect much in the way of lighthearted classics. "We were inspired by the music and album art of heavy rock," says Bright. "You know, images of barbarians riding on the backs of pterodactyls... that sorta thing."

On the surface, the most notable "heavy" thing about Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock is its all-new rather fantastical quest mode, which takes players from CBGBs in NYC all the way to the "molten lava fields of rock treachery." In our demo, we were introduced to protagonists Johnny Napalm and Lars Ümlout, two rockers with some rather transformative powers: along the journey from club to nether-realm, these guys become actual rock warriors—Johnny an undead ghoul, and Lars a burly boar-headed brute. It's all part of the game's story, which sets them on their way to helping the Demi-God of Rock take down "The Beast" and, in the process, save the whole of rock n' roll. Of course, transforming these ambitious rockers with a penchant for shredding into literal guitar heroes requires some skilled instrumentation on the part of the player; the entire narrative takes place as you hop from playing one song to the next, so don't expect any sort of third-person adventuring to drag you away from the music.

Perhaps even more interesting, however, is what's underneath the hood. Warriors of Rock includes various modes to make challenging friends (and enemies) easier, as evidenced by Quickplay+, which includes 13 unique gameplay challenges for each and every song on the disc (out of 30 total challenges), as well as for most of the songs in the Guitar Hero music library. You'll be able to go up against your online community in anything from individual High Scores to Star Power Relay with your full band, with leaderboards for each one to track the best-in-class, and an in-game progress meter to let you know how you're faring.

▼ The legendary CBGB Club—which played host to the likes of the Ramones, the Misfits, and the Cramps during their heyday—makes an appearance in *Warriors of Rock*'s quest mode. In real life, unfortunately, the club closed its doors in October 2006

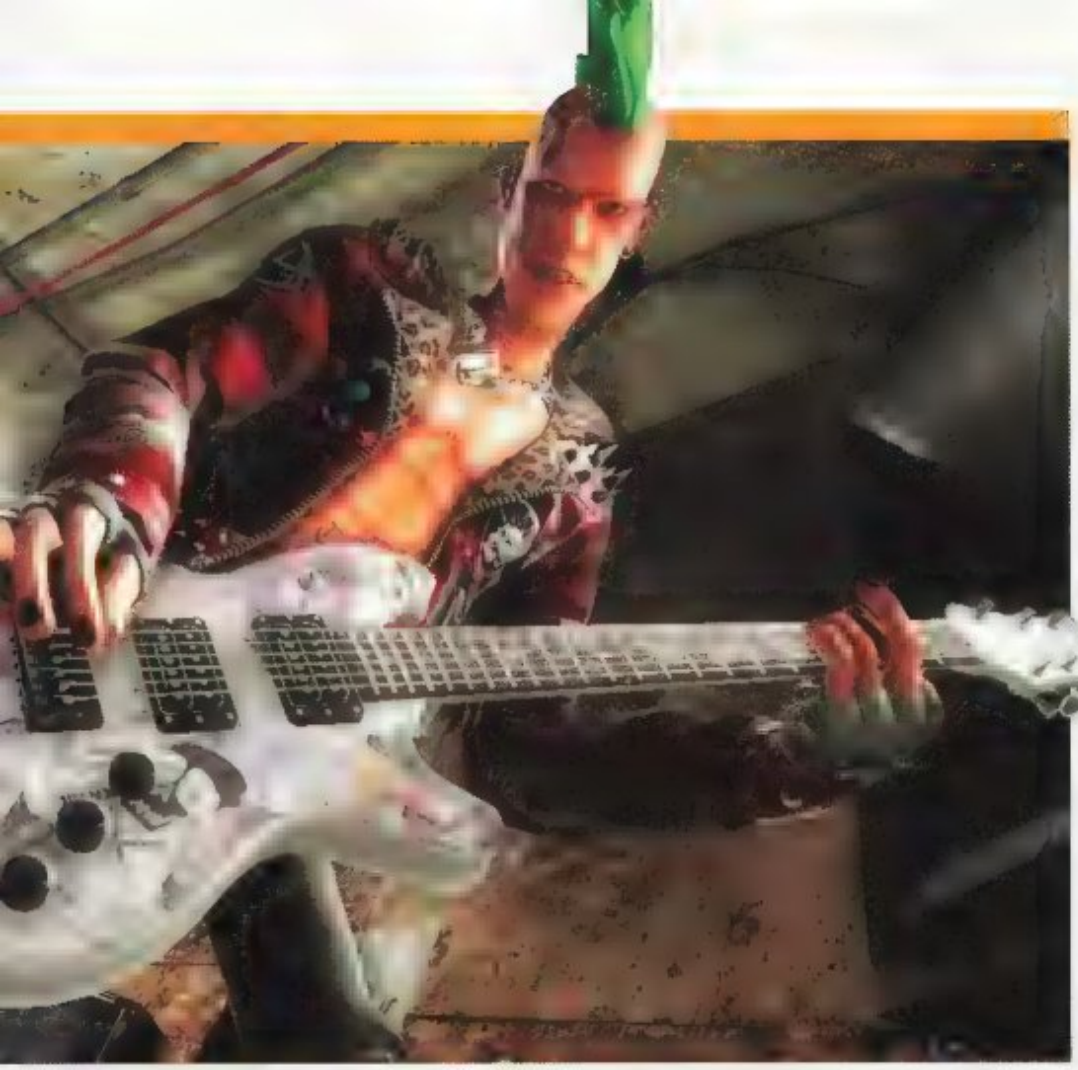
IN GAME

POWER CHALLENGES

New to the game's Quickplay+ mode are Power Challenges, which let players choose any two warrior powers they have unlocked in the Quest mode, and attempt to earn high scores and earn extra stars—all of which unlocks bonus content such as instruments. Activision likens the premise to Call of Duty's popular online play, with stars in Guitar Hero serving the same role as XP does in CoD.

SONGS TO SAVE ROCK BY

Activision has confirmed that it will be including more than 90 songs on the Warriors of Rock game disc, and thus far they've announced 20 of them. Early favorites include Black Sabbath's "Children of the Grave," Buzzcocks' "What Do I Get," Dire Straits' "Money For Nothing," Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody," and Twisted Sister's "We're Not Gonna Take It." Oh, and Dethklok's "Bloodlines." "Muse is about as light as we get," says project lead Brian Bright.



PS3 XBOX 360 Wii

GAME DETAILS

GUITAR HERO: WARRIORS OF ROCK

INFO
Publisher: Activision
Developer: Neversoft
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Four-player simultaneous, online play, online leaderboards

GENRE
Music

RELEASE DATE
September 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Guitar heroes, metal heads, and rockers of all ages.

ALL THE LITTLE THINGS

Activision is working hard to streamline the Guitar Hero experience, by incorporating various refinements all over the place. Set lists have a new look, and new sorting options let you find the track you're looking for much faster. The game keeps track of how often you play various songs, and based on this data recommends similar songs that you might want to purchase from the Guitar Hero store (think Apple's "Genius" feature in iTunes). A song progress meter tells you how far along you are in a particular track, letting you inform your calloused fingers with a high degree of certainty that you're "almost...there."

ROCKING CHAIRS

Warriors of Rock's all-new Quest mode will feature narration by legendary KISS front man Gene Simmons, as well as an original song by Megadeth's Dave Mustaine. Players will have the ability to choose what events they perform in what order, which can be accessed from the game's overhead map.

WIL SAYS:

One thing's for sure—we're not suffering from a dearth of music video games these days. That said, the RPG elements of Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock seem promising.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Tons of new challenges for every song in the *GH* catalog.
- All new quest mode let the Neversoft artists go wild.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Doesn't add any new instruments or gameplay.

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MEDAL OF HONOR

XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS

RP

MEDAL OF HONOR

INFO
Publisher: EA
Developer: Dice
Platforms: Xbox 360, PS3

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
A lot

GENRE
First-person shooter

RELEASE DATE
October 12, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Anyone who loved *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* and is pleased to see a great franchise return.

"WE'VE UPDATED THE SETTING, THE WEAPONS, AND THE LANGUAGE TO REFLECT THE CURRENT CONFLICT."

Gaming is often strangely cyclical. When *Medal of Honor: Allied Assault* was released in 2002, it became one of the most influential shooters of all time. Paying impeccable attention to historical detail, ballistics, and staying true to the World War II experience, *MoH* revolutionized war games. Of course, success spawns strange progeny, and while the *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield* franchises are still going strong, the *MoH* franchise has been plagued by sub-standard sequels, the departure of key team members, switching developers, and a franchise that, for lack of a better phrase, has gone completely AWOL.

This all raises the question: If the series has lost its appeal, then why dedicate eight pages to it? Well, having had a chance to look at the latest *Medal of Honor*, we're more than stoked to say that the franchise has definitely gotten its mojo back. With that in mind, we got a chance to dish with the development team and get down and dirty about why this *Medal of Honor* could be the best one yet.

AN EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

According to lead writer Mike McCarthy, "There are elements that made *Medal of Honor* what it is and we tried to extract that ethos and bring it to the present day. You are going to feel connected to the game in the same way players were connected to *Allied Assault*. Everyone was familiar with the larger events of WWII, so they felt a connection to those events in that game."

Creating a sense of connection in the new *MoH*, the game takes place in current-day Afghanistan, and while *Allied Assault* relied on the world's collective connection to World War II, the current nine-year-old war in Afghanistan is a perfect arena within which to revive the franchise. To this point, McCarthy told @GAMER, "We've updated the setting, the weapons, and the language to reflect the current conflict, but the mindset and the ethos of combat that made the original game popular is intact here."

THE COMBATANTS

In *MoH*, players take on a number of different roles that, according to the development team, represent the full range of the U.S. Military. *MoH* focuses on what the developers call the "scalpel" and the "sledgehammer." Simply put, the Tier 1 Operators "represent the very precise, deliberate, precision instruments of warfare, and the U.S. Army Rangers represent the overwhelming force of big military."

What does this mean for the in-game experience? In *MoH* you're battling Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and depending on the mission, you'll either have to employ stealth or go in guns a-blazing to succeed.

In multiplayer you'll get to play as either the U.S. Military or Al Qaeda and the Taliban. While the gameplay modes that we tested were plenty fun, it did feel weird fighting against U.S. forces, considering that this war is currently going on. Patrick Liu, the multiplayer producer with developer DICE, echoed this sentiment, "It did feel weird initially, but it has also been of great help to create something authentic. In the end, it's all about creating an exciting set piece, and we know people are interested in current events. The core in our multiplayer is still about competition, whether it's an asymmetric (as in Combat Mission) or symmetric (as in Team Assault) game mode."

The urban levels in Team Deathmatch are frightening. With broken-down cars and other obstacles, there are tons of choke points.

VEHICLES ARE IMPORTANT IN *MOH* >

THERE BE DRONES
MoH will have a number of vehicles that impact gameplay: A10-Thunderbolts, UAV (Drones), APCs, and other aircraft are prominent.

BROTHERS IN ARMS

Oftentimes you'll be fighting as a member of a small special forces unit. In these missions your goal will be to get in, get out, and make sure that all of your brothers make it home.

According to executive producer Greg Goodrich, "We have a story to tell about a community of individuals. A community that we intend to honor without political discussion."

Other titles have tried to depict current-day conflicts, such as *Six Days in Fallujah*. That said, the *MoH* team has managed to avoid the political pitfalls that effectively killed that game before release.

EVOLVING THE SERIES

According to Greg Goodrich, the game's executive producer, "First and foremost, we looked to the core tenets of our franchise. Our intent has always been to tell the soldier's story in an honorable and respectful way. *Medal of Honor* has always been a historical fiction. Meaning, the narrative follows a band of fictional characters in a historical event. And like always, we have a story to tell about a community of individuals. *Medal of Honor* has always focused on the soldier's story and it continues to do so." While *MoH* is all new, the team was sure to include a few surprises that will no doubt please fans of the original. For instance, Sgt. Jim Patterson is the grandson of Lt. Jimmy Patterson from the original *Medal of Honor*.

"GET IT RIGHT!" >

01 AIR SUPPORT
Air support is key in *MoH*. Whether in campaign mode or multiplayer, you'll be able to get help from above.

02 THE SCALPEL
In some missions it'll just be you and a small unit of special forces–stealth will be key.

03 STEALTH
Just because you're using stealthier tactics doesn't mean that you won't be called upon to pull the trigger.

04 THE TALIBAN
In campaign mode you'll be fighting to defeat Al Qaeda and their Taliban hosts. In multiplayer, you can fight as or against them.

EPIC MULTIPLAYER

MoH's multiplayer modes are awesome.

GET READY FOR SOME EPIC MULTIPLAYER BATTLES

During our demo, we got to participate in several multiplayer modes, including Team Deathmatch and Team Assault. Whether you're playing Deathmatch or Assault Mode, high ground is at a premium. Perches on abandoned buildings are perfect for sniping guys down below.

Playing Team Assault against the developer's testers was actually a little frightening. As the Taliban, we had to defend certain parts of the map. And when the U.S. Military started coming toward us—replete with tanks, an A10 Warthog, and Drones at their disposal—well, that, coupled with our relative lack of experience with the title, spelled certain doom.

THE REAL DEAL >

"GET IT RIGHT!"

While the developers are gamers at heart, they really wanted to honor not just the *Medal of Honor* franchise, but the men and women in the armed services. According to Mike McCarthy, "All of our consultants echoed that refrain time and time again, 'Get it right.' We always ask ourselves, are we getting it right?"

To that end, the team was able to work with a wide variety of military consultants. "But our access to the Tier 1 Operators has been absolutely unprecedented and their contributions have been a complete game-changer for this franchise as well as our team," added McCarthy. "Their laser-like focus, attention to detail, and uncompromising professionalism have affected everything we do."

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This expansion opens up the workplace for Sims' fans.

Who are the crew?

@GAMER has picked the best of the best reviewers to provide you with accurate information about the best-of-the-best games on store shelves now.

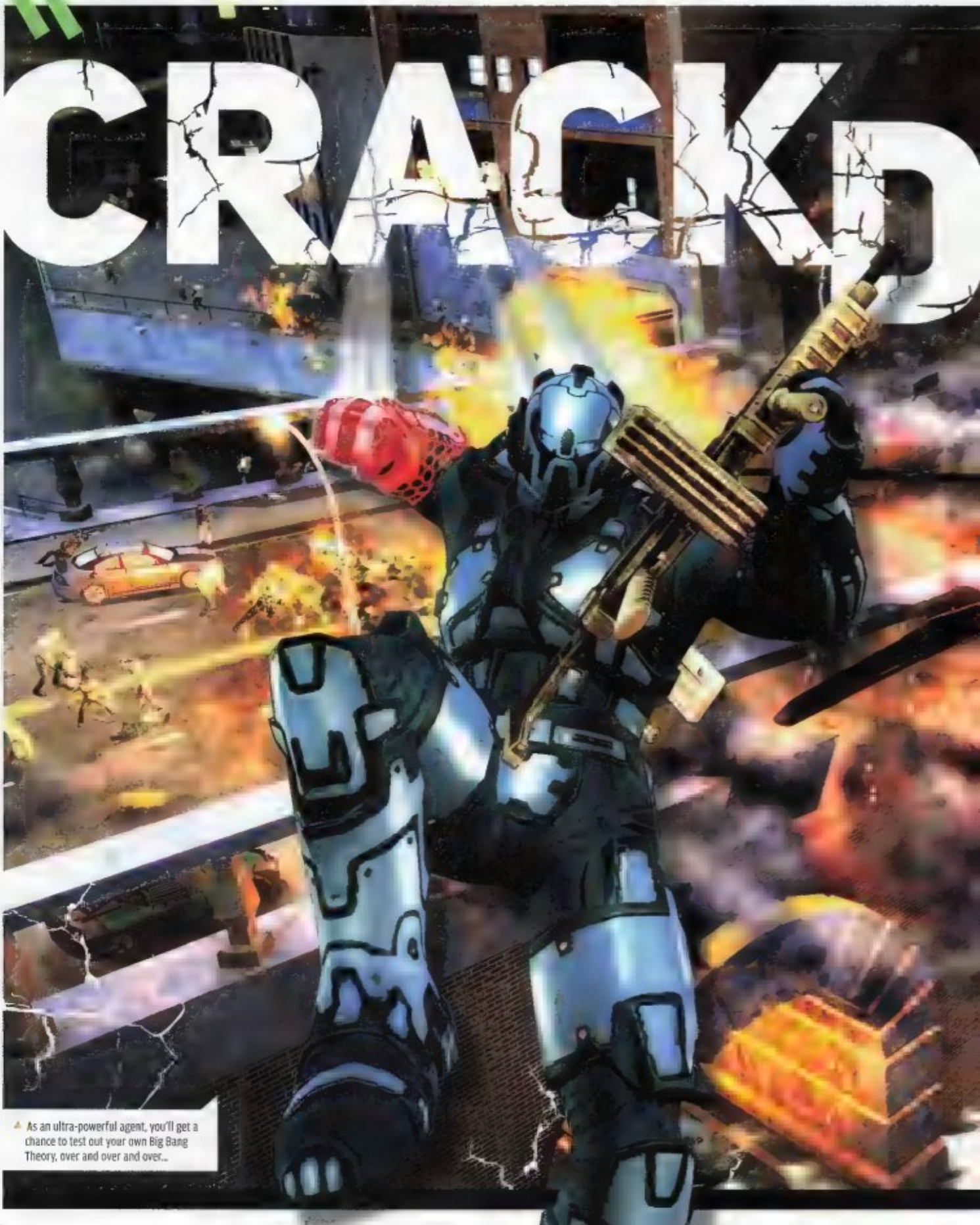
Matt is a full-time freelance journalist who's been gaming for over 30 years. He doesn't plan on stopping until every alien, zombie, and Nazi has felt his wrath.

Mitch is a freelance writer and university student living in Alberta, Canada. His love for writing, games, cartoons, and sandwiches knows no bounds.

Chuck may hail from the hallowed halls of *PC Gamer* magazine, but he owns every console system. He is currently obsessed with *Chuzzle* for the iPhone.

Meghan is a Chicago-based freelance journalist. She enjoys all things game-related as well as biking, snowboarding, and writing stories she never plans to publish.

CRACKD



As an ultra-powerful agent, you'll get a chance to test out your own Big Bang Theory, over and over and over...

OWN 2

CRACKDOWN 2 WILL SURELY BE A BIG KILLER OF PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY AND SPARE TIME.

When all hell is breaking out on the streets, you want a big gun and a fast car. Oh, and you

Words: Andy Eddy

XBOX 360

GAME DETAILS

CRACKDOWN 2

INFO
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Ruffian Games
Platforms: Xbox 360

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE:
Up to 4 players co-op online, up to 16 players competitive online

GENRE
Action

RELEASE DATE
July 6, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Gamers who loved the original and those looking for a quality game to carry them through the summer.

▲ "Flight 1, Agency Airlines, requesting clearance for a landing . in five seconds."

The original Crackdown certainly got onto gamers' radars in a somewhat sideways push: The game wasn't a known quantity—it had no history to speak of a couple of years ago—but suddenly became a highly in-demand product when it was announced as being the "key" for players to get access to the Halo 3 beta.

However, while many thought that the move was a gimmick by Microsoft to raise an unknown game's profile when Crackdown came out in February 2007, the gamers who flocked to it for the exclusive Halo connection it offered found a

SAY "TAG, YOU'RE IT!" WITH A MISSILE.

compelling action game. Now more than three years later, Crackdown is getting its sequel—and it's another winner.

As with the original game, Crackdown 2 starts you off as a base-level agent looking to take down the criminal element in an increasingly dangerous Pacific City. Orbs are strewn around the city at various levels, and they'll help you boost your abilities, which enables you to jump higher, which in turn gives you access to higher orbs...and so on. Before long, you're making incredible leaps from building to building, nabbing orbs that were previously out of reach.

All through the adventure, you're clearing out pockets of nefarious activity in the vast open-world Pacific City. You have access to myriad guns and vehicles, and using them boosts your skills for driving, explosives, and more, making you a more capable agent. Taking out these ne'er-do-wells and signing on for missions that target the bad guys' organizational structure gradually chips away at the dark element.

Speaking of dark, there are more threats than the organized-crime factions. A virus has been introduced into the city, which turns citizens into "Freaks" that attack in swarms. There's also the Cell, a growing resistance movement that doesn't trust your Agency—another group of people trying to do you harm.

The original Crackdown added a fun multiplayer component that boasted collaborative co-op action. Crackdown 2 supports four-player co-op to satisfy players who enjoyed it from the first game, but also adds a 16-player competitive element with team-vs.-team and every-man-for-himself deathmatch modes, as well as an incredibly frantic Rocket Tag mode that lets you say "You're it!" with a missile.

Crackdown 2 will surely be a big killer of personal productivity and spare time during the summer. While you should definitely get outside and enjoy the nice weather, I won't mind doing a rain dance now and again in hopes of getting some time seeking out elusive orbs and taking down the bad guys in Pacific City.

GAMEPLAY \\

▲ Show of hands here: Who'd have figured that *Crackdown 2* would be filled with flames and explosions? So, everyone? Yeah, you can put your hands down now....

One thing I'm curious about is how Crackdown 2 handles co-op. The first game didn't really require you to work with your partner when you teamed up, which seems to go against what co-op is all about. Crackdown 2 reportedly has more and better defined collaboration between the partners, which I would think increases co-op mode's entertainment value.

MISSING IN ACTION I

When I asked if there was something that didn't make it into Crackdown 2 that the development team wanted, Billy Thomson, the game's creative director at Ruffian, said we won't get a Splicer in our inventory. "A second after pressing fire, two little rockets would then be ejected from the weapon," Thomson explained, and then a laser beam would be generated between the rockets. The two projectiles would "then pick up speed and fly forward through the air, cutting anything in half along the line" created by the laser. Perhaps we'll see that as part of a downloadable add-on later.

A LOOK BEHIND THE SCENES \\\

MISSING IN ACTION I

Regarding items that had to be dropped from Crackdown 2's development, Thomson said that players will sadly be missing out on the "Hypnotron." "This gadget would allow the player to hypnotize any character and make them follow and protect the player for a defined period of time." That sounds like it would have been a lot of fun, so let's hope Ruffian keeps it on the drawing board.

ORB MOBILITY

Orbs were a great pursuit in the original Crackdown, but the new game takes it up a notch with "Renegade Orbs." You may spot one and it'll seem within reach, but get close and it'll take off, moving away from you. You'll need your skills up to stay on its trailing tail in order to catch it. Others can only be captured while you're in a vehicle, so you'll need to increase your driving skills, also.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- If you loved orb-finding in the first game, you'll be in heaven in the sequel.
- Progressing your agent to jump higher and higher is a satisfying thrill.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- At some point, the game will end and you'll be done.
- In September, *Halo: Reach* will come out, which is great on its own, but not for those who want to keep playing *Crackdown 2*.

- Leaping Party
- Orb-tacular
- BOOOOOOM!

OVERALL RATING: 4.5/5

PS3 XBOX 360

BACKBREAKER

505 Games' footballer is a fresh look at gridiron action • Words: Matt Cabral

GAME DETAILS / RATINGS

BACKBREAKER

Publisher: 505 Games
Developer: NaturalMotion Games
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360

Split-screen two-player local, split-screen/up to four-player online competitive

Sports

June 1, 2010

Pigskin players looking for an arcade-y alternative to *Madden*.

Introducing a new football game into the Madden-dominated market is a big risk, but 505 Games and NaturalMotion are making an end-zone run, anyway. And this is no Hail Mary; *Backbreaker* is carefully crafted to be an alternative to EA's perennial juggernaut.

Also, don't let its name fool you. The bone-crunching moniker doesn't signal that it's taking the approach of other over-the-top entries, such as *Blitz: The League*. On the contrary, its descriptive title refers to NaturalMotion's Euphoria engine, which forgoes canned animations in favor of dynamic hits that take accurate physics and muscle reactions into account, rendering all the realism of a live game.

The resulting authenticity is impressive, yielding varied, detail-drenched animations from each helmet-on-helmet encounter. While not every hit brings a cringe-inducing display; many—such as a player who's slammed mid-jump—make the pain pop off the screen. The inherent nature of the technology grounds many collisions in gridiron realism, resulting in tame but authentic animations.

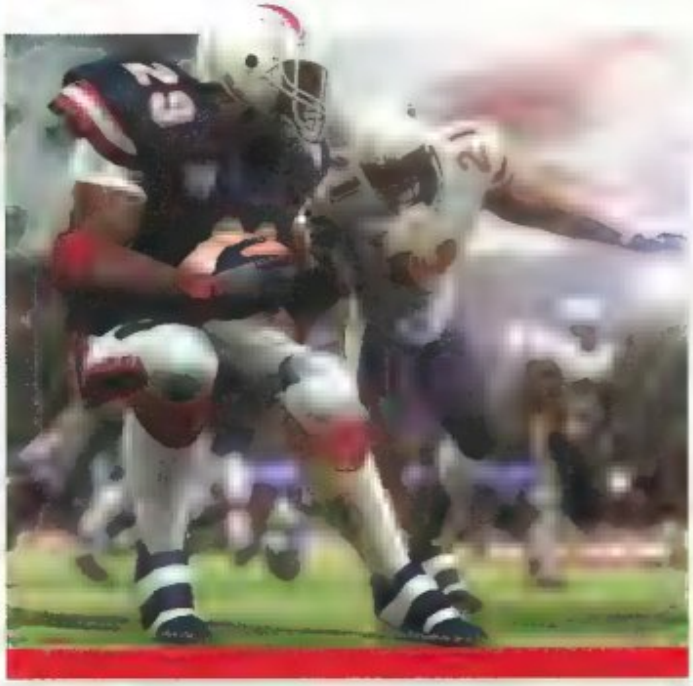
Complementing this differentiating feature is a camera that zooms in on the player you're controlling. While this brings you closer to the action than the standard overhead view, it'll likely be *Backbreaker*'s most polarizing aspect. It puts you on the field in a refreshing, up-close way, but also sacrifices some strategy because of the reduced field of vision. Those looking for a lighter, arcade-y take won't mind, but Madden die-hards will no doubt miss the nuance.

That same sentiment can be translated to almost every aspect of *Backbreaker*. For instance, lack of an NFL license is balanced by robust team, logo, and uniform customization. The controls might not be as versatile, but they're also less daunting to rookie armchair QBs. Those looking for a pick-up-and-play entry, supported by some fresh ideas and robust multiplayer support— online and off, and including a fun split-screen mode—may want to huddle up for *Backbreaker*.

FROM THE FORCE TO FOOTBALL

NaturalMotion's Euphoria, the realism-amping tech behind *Backbreaker*'s tackles, is new to sports games, but it's been immersing gamers for years. It made a Force-tossed Stormtrooper grab for something to break his fall in *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*; it gave a tipsy Niko a more realistic (and humorous) stumble in *Grand Theft Auto IV*; and ensured that no two capped cowboys tumbled the same way in *Red Dead Redemption*.

▲ You aren't likely to see players do the same thing twice, thanks to Euphoria. Every impact, jump, or juke alters what happens.



ANDY SAYS: I hope gamers give *Backbreaker* a chance to show its stuff. Granted, Madden has built up a big audience for a reason, but it's nice to see that others are willing to take it on, even if just to try to get a sliver of the pie that Madden grabs a big slice of every year. Perhaps *Backbreaker* can earn a following and build on it.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- The Euphoria technology is a great addition to make the gameplay more realistic.
- Coming out before *Madden* gives *Backbreaker* a chance to get in front of some gamers.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

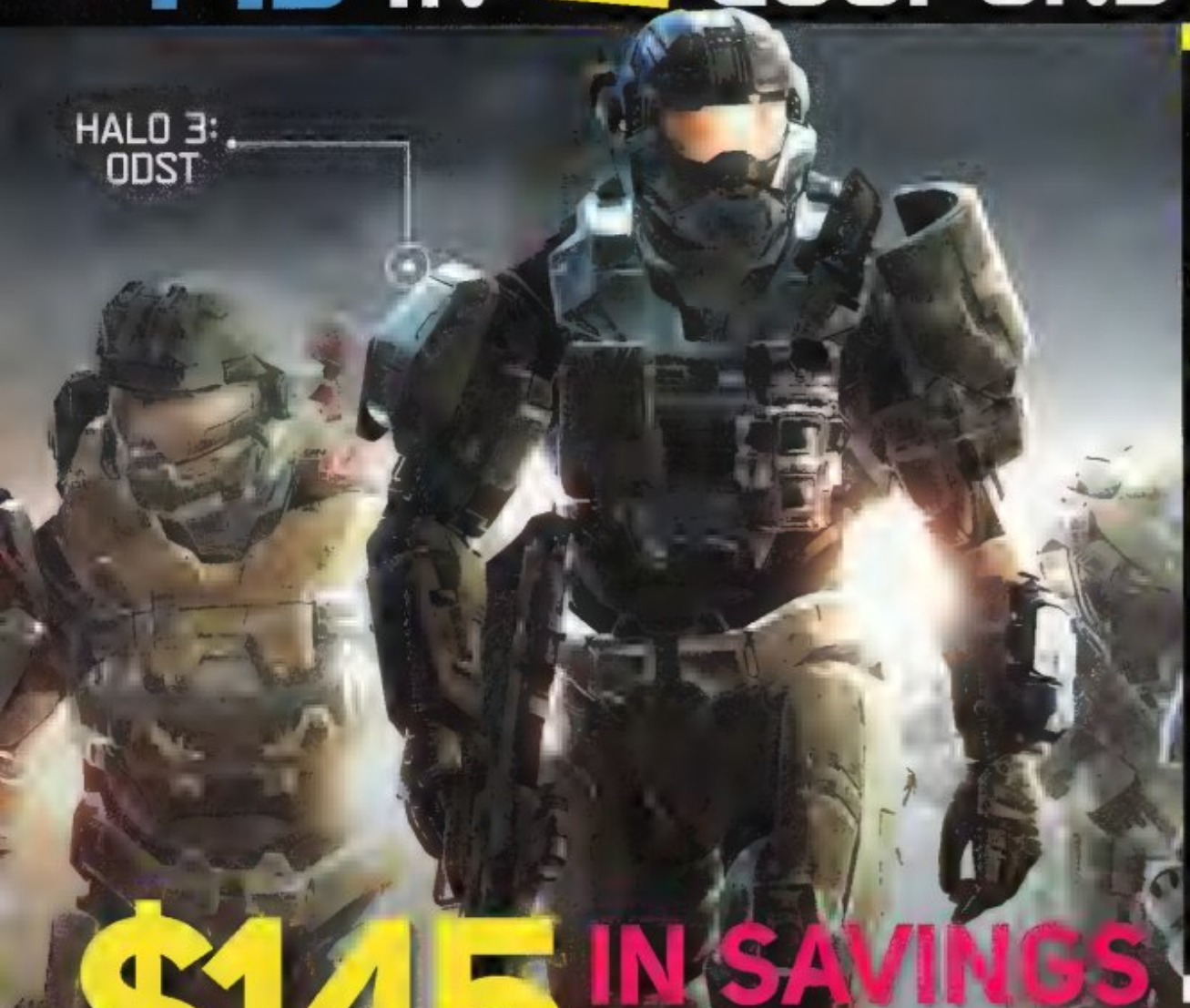
- It's going to be awfully hard to compete with *Madden*, considering how long the developers have been honing it.

- In-Your-Face
- Realistic Tackles
- Arcade-y Action

OVERALL RATING: 3.5/5

$145 IN BEST BUY COUPONS

For Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, and PC games.



01 HALO 3: ODST
Become an Orbital Drop Shock Trooper.

02 BIOSHOCK 2
See Rapture from inside a Big Daddy suit.

03 SKATE 3
Port Carverton awaits your shredding skills.

04 TIGER WOODS 11
Golf's premier player takes you to the links once more.

05 FIFA WORLD CUP 10: SOUTH AFRICA
Lead your nation's team into soccer's pageant gathering.

06 PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS
Master time and new elemental powers.

07 JUST DANCE
Show off your funky dance moves on the Wii.

08 ASSASSIN'S CREED II
Embark on a dangerous adventure in Italy.

$145 IN SAVINGS THIS ISSUE? YES, PLEASE!

Because we know that the one thing you like as much as games is a great deal

For the premiere issue of @GAMER, we're excited to bring Reward Zone Gamers Club members $145 in coupons for savings off the following hit games at your local Best Buy retail store. Not yet a Gamers Club member? It's free and easy to join: Just sign up today at myrewardzone.bestbuy.com. Members earn bonus points for every dollar they spend on qualifying gaming purchases that can be traded in for bonus points. And subscribe to @GAMER today at www.atgamermagazine.com/subscribe to keep more valuable coupons coming to your mailbox every issue!

$145 IN BEST BUY COUPONS

For Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, and PC games.

01. HALO 3: ODST

Re-experience the famed Halo epic storyline from a different perspective in Halo 3: ODST. Become an Orbital Drop Shock Trooper, highly trained special forces operators known for valor and bravery, as you investigate the mysterious events leading up to Master Chief's return to New Mombasa in Halo 3. Says Official Xbox Magazine: "Bungie's latest masterpiece clocks in with a healthy seven-hour-plus campaign, an endlessly entertaining Firefight multiplayer mode, and a second disc packed with the full Halo 3 multiplayer suite (including three new maps). Believe it or not, ODST is Bungie's best-designed Halo yet."

02. BIOSHOCK 2

Return to the undersea city of Rapture 10 years after the events of the original BioShock in this amazing sequel that puts you inside the Big Daddy suit. You'll need all your newly acquired Plasmid powers and shooting skills to survive against new threats like the Big Sister and to discover why little girls are being kidnapped from the surface world. Can you foil the plot of your unseen foe? Multiplayer mode allows you to experience Rapture's civil war by playing as its citizens and experience the mighty city as it was before its fall.

03. SKATE 3

Get ready for the ultimate skateboarding experience that lets you put together a skate team for both offline and online cooperative play. Learn all the ins-and-outs of skateboarding in the game's Skate School, where you can hone your skills in tricks like darkslides and underflips before hitting the streets with your team. Skate 3 also adds the all-new city of Port Carverton, a skater's paradise filled with skate parks and unique areas perfect for boarding. Creative players can even build their own skate parks from scratch using the included Skate Park editor, and share their creations online with friends.

04. TIGER WOODS 11

The first name in golf is back for another round, and this edition features one of the most prestigious tournaments in golf, The Ryder Cup. Select a U.S. or European squad and participate in competitions of foursomes, fourballs, and singles in order to win The Ryder Cup for your team. Team-based gameplay is available offline and online on the Xbox 360 and PS3. Online mode allows up to 24 players to compete in head-to-head competition. In addition, the Wii edition supports Wii MotionPlus-enhanced swing mechanics and the PS3 version will support the PS3 Move motion controller.

$145 IN BEST BUY COUPONS

For Xbox 360, PS3, Wii, and PC games.

05. 2010 FIFA WORLD CUP: SOUTH AFRICA

Take on the world in *2010 FIFA World Cup* as you compete as one of 199 teams in the largest sporting event on the planet. Lead your nation to victory in soccer, playing in all 10 officially licensed stadiums, as you dribble, pass, kick and score against other top players. Go online and participate in online tournaments against real gamers from around the globe as the official tournament is brought to life with authentic details like confetti cannons, streamers, giant banners, seat cards, flags, and even fireworks. Become part of history in this hit footie experience!

06. PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE FORGOTTEN SANDS

While visiting his brother's kingdom, the Prince discovers the royal palace under siege by a mighty army bent on its destruction in this acrobatic action/adventure game. As the Prince, you must journey to a land of legendary combat and race against time to save the kingdom from destruction. Wield the Prince's ability to control time and four new types of elemental powers—Fire, Water, Earth, and Air—to battle enemies in huge-scale combat. An all-new adventure awaits you; will you heed the call to action?

07. JUST DANCE

Get down and funky in this dancing game made exclusively for the Nintendo Wii. Move your body in rhythm with an array of hits from across the decades and dance the night away with friends and family. Just Dance's soundtrack includes more than 30 songs, including pop anthems like "Womanizer" by Britney Spears, "Dare" by Gorillaz, and "I Like to Move It" by Reel 2 Real. Just use the Wii Remote and Nunchuk to dance in time to the music and your movements will be registered onscreen. Best yet, Just Dance is a fun way to sneak in some exercise and burn calories for players of all ages.

08. ASSASSIN'S CREED II

Become Ezio, a deadly assassin during the time of the Italian renaissance, in Assassin's Creed II. Learn the code of the assassin as you embark on a tale of power and corruption, wielding weapons and equipment designed by Leonardo da Vinci himself. Official Xbox Magazine calls it "a gorgeous, rich and believable world that draws you in and doesn't let go until the climactic finale.... We can think of plenty of words that could describe Assassin's Creed II—involving, exciting, cinematic—but one word sums it up beautifully: 'killer.' "

LEGO HARRY POTTER: YEARS 1–4

How do you build an ambitious and magical *Harry Potter* game that can enchant both kids and adults? • Words: Chuck Osborn

Anyone who thinks LEGO games are just kids' stuff probably has never played one. Previous games like *LEGO Star Wars* and *LEGO Batman* have not only displayed a quirky sense of humor and a mischievous streak, they've also proven to truly fit that maxim of being "fun for all ages." Thankfully, *LEGO Harry Potter* is another chip off the plastic block.

Combining the first four books in the *Harry Potter* series with the irrepressible charm of the LEGO franchise, *LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1–4* is a magical mishmash that actually manages to improve on past games with deeper gameplay and even more to do. The game's story missions roughly follow the events of the books and films, except that almost every object in the environment here can be broken apart into LEGO blocks, or magically manipulated. Collect "studs" that explode from broken items to purchase new characters, equipment, special blocks, and even new spells that can be cast by Harry and his pals.

Because there are so many secrets to uncover in every level and a shockingly large gallery of characters to unlock and play as (more than 170!), *LEGO Harry Potter* has tremendous replay value. And that's just in the story missions! There are also magic lessons to undertake and LEGO builder levels that enable you to make your own creations. Families that need a little extra magic in the living room will also surely appreciate the two-player co-op mode. For fans of "the boy who lived" or previous LEGO games, consider *LEGO Harry Potter* "the game that must be played."

▼ Magic spells can be cast at will or aimed at certain objects or areas.

PLATFORMS: THE DIFFERENCES

All versions are identical except for minor differences:

XBOX 360 / PS3
Supports online co-op

NINTENDO DS
Stylus-based movement and spell-casting

THE GANG'S ALL HERE
Nearly every character in the first four books/movies can be unlocked and played in *LEGO Harry Potter*. Many have unique abilities, such as Ron Weasley and his pet rat.

WIZ KID
A new twist to the *LEGO* games is the ability to learn new spells and keep them in your arsenal of abilities. Some can levitate objects, freeze other characters, turn yourself invisible, or (as shown here) light up a room.

▲ Fred and George Weasley may be identical twins, but at least you can keep track of who's who by the initials on their shirts, just like Terrance and Phillip of *South Park*.

▲ Relive all the famous scenes from the first four books, like Harry's showdown with the Basilisk in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*

ANDY SAYS:
The *LEGO* games are all-ages' fare, but they're not dumbed down. There's a lot of gameplay—and while it won't likely stump you too often, it's not a pushover either. And the cutscenes are humorous.

PS3 XBOX 360 DS PSP PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

LEGO HARRY POTTER YEARS 1-4

INFO
Publisher: Warner Bros. Interactive Entertainment
Developer: Traveller's Tales
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Nintendo DS, PSP, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
2-player co-op

GENRE
Action/Adventure

RELEASE DATE
June 29, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Kids and adults alike.

GAMER

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Endless replayability
- Loads of characters and secrets
- Fun for players of all skill levels

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Camera angles that obscure items or action
- Having to wait for the next installment

- Cheeky
- Fun puzzles
- Tons o' secrets

OVERALL RATING: 4.5/5

If you like *LEGO Harry Potter*, play *LEGO Star Wars: The Complete Saga*—it's all six movies in one gigantic adventure!

All three band members are captured in the classic Rock Band style.

GREEN DAY ROCK BAND

MTV Games gives the pop-punk trio a dedicated console tribute

Words: Andy Eddy

The instrument-driven music game genre has really taken off in the past few years, though some are seeing it as having hit a saturation point. Not only have we seen numerous versions of the *Guitar Hero* and *Rock Band* series', both brands have also been spun off into single-band releases featuring such illustrious names as The Beatles, Metallica, and Aerosmith. And now we can add Green Day to the list with the appearance of *Green Day: Rock Band*.

If you're familiar with the *Rock Band*/*Guitar Hero* craze, you'll feel comfortable with *GD:RB*. Much like *The Beatles: Rock Band*, the game supports harmonies, so you can have a full band of two guitarists (guitar and bass), a drummer, and three singers—but there's a single-player campaign where you can play in any of those band slots, and there's also a full co-op campaign.

It might be important to note that I'm not a big Green Day fan, but I certainly am aware of the band's history. The first thing I realized when I started playing was that Green Day has a lot more popular songs than I expected. While *GD:RB* does pick various songs from different albums, you can play all of *Dookie*, *American Idiot*, and *21st Century Breakdown* in the game (provided you purchase a few of the band's previously offered songs). The game provides 47 tunes out of the box, and while you have to gradually unlock them within the campaign, if you just want to go in and play any of them, they're instantly available in Quickplay.

Of course, it's likely the most fun will be when you get together with your friends and play as a band. If you're a big Green Day fan and were hoping to

▲ SING WITH ZING *Green Day: Rock Band* gives up to three singers a chance to team up on a song—the second MTV/Harmonix release to do that. *The Beatles: Rock Band* was a great debut for three-part harmonizing, given the Fab Four's wonderful vocal layering. The Green Day song catalog doesn't feature harmonies as intricate as the Beatles' tracks, which means that budding singers might have an easier time picking up the craft and learning the parts.

build out your plastic-instrument collection with signature axes, that's not being offered for Green Day (as it was for The Beatles).

So how does it play? Well, it's definitely a *Rock Band* game. But to me, and maybe it's because I'm not a big Green Day fan, it seems like a strange selection to have as a one-band game—and the MTV/Harmonix follow-up to *The Beatles: Rock Band*. Perhaps they wanted to get away from the more classic bands in favor of a modern act, but, while Green Day is a band that's still growing in popularity, it seems that other popular bands could have been approached first.

In the end, though, what "band game" to buy is a personal decision based on your relationship with the music that's being offered. If you've listened to *Dookie* so much that the laser in your CD player has starting poking holes into the disc, you'll probably find *Green Day: Rock Band* to be a worthy addition to your game library. Otherwise, you might want to wait for *Rock Band 3* or *Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock* (or what most gamers are calling *Guitar Hero 6*), both of which are expected out later this year.

SIX MORE SONGS TO DOWNLOAD

If you're hoping to fill up your hard drive with more Green Day tunes, don't forget that six songs from the 21st Century Breakdown album were released earlier this year as DLC (downloadable content). These, combined with the *Green Day: Rock Band* track list, means that the album's contents are fully available for your gameplay enjoyment. A Harmonix spokesperson told @GAMER that there are no plans to release additional songs from the band as DLC at this time.

JULIAN SAYS: *Green Day: Rock Band* is as fun to play as any other Rock Band game, but that's also its drawback—if you've played other games in the series, there are few new surprises here. Green Day fans will get the most out of this. Those wanting new gameplay features will have to wait for *Rock Band 3*.

XBOX 360 PS3 Wii

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

GREEN DAY: ROCK BAND

INFO
Publisher: MTV Games
Developer: Harmonix Music Systems
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to six players co-op, local or online

GENRE
Music

RELEASE DATE
June 8, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Music gamers who aspire to be American Idiots.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- Packed with a ton of Green Day tunes—if you're a fan of the band you're going to be in 7th Heaven.
- Songs can be exported for use with *Rock Band* and *Rock Band 2* (for an additional fee).

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Full retail price seems steep for what you're getting.

- Punk Hits
- Devious Timing
- Rebellious

@GAMER OVERALL RATING: 3.5/5

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 11

If you're willing to learn the subtleties, you'll enjoy the "new" Tiger

• Words: William O'Neal

It's often said that golf is a great walk, ruined. Of course, it's only ruined on those days when your game is truly off. When you're dialed in, it's a great walk improved by the feel of a perfect strike, a few cold ones, and the right to gloat to your friends whose walks are...well, being ruined because they suck and you don't.

If *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11* is considered a golf simulation, it mirrors this real-world reality quite well. Whether playing a skins game, a few rounds at the Players Championship, or competing in the Ryder Cup, I experienced everything from the elation of a much-needed birdie to the rage that engulfs every golfer when you three-putt a hole that you've birdied plenty of times before. This time, though, instead of throwing my club on the ground, I can throw my controller.

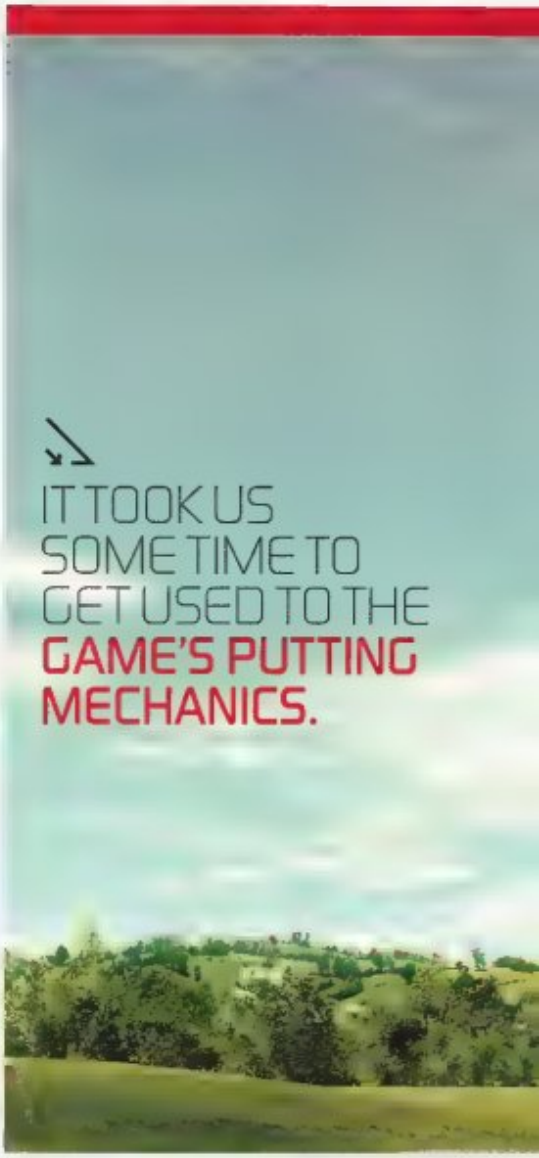
As with all perennial sports games, when you first fire it up you're immediately thrust into a typical tirade: "Why did they change this? It worked fine last year." We definitely had some of this with *Tiger 11*. While tee and approach shots were easy enough to dial in, it took us some time to get used to the putting mechanics.

To that end, this year's game has a new feature called Focus, which you quickly learn is very important. The best way to really get a grasp on how Focus works is to play a four-player skins game controlling all of the players yourself, which will teach you when and how to best use it. For instance, have one player only use it on the green; have another only use it off the tee; and have the others use it pitching or in bunkers. Focus can do everything from adding a Power Boost to a shot, spin, shrinking the aiming circle, and, most importantly, putt preview. Every time you use Focus it depletes and has to increase over time. When we first fired up *Tiger 11*, we used our Focus up too quickly doing putt previews, which meant that we didn't have any to control play in the next hole. Grrrr...

Of course, the more we played *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11* the less frustrating it became and the more fun we had. As we mentioned before, it is a golf simulation. As I played through a season, I found myself using Focus less on putts (where I used it exclusively at first) choosing instead to use it on drives and approach shots.

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 boasts several new courses, including Celtic Manor Resort, The Greenbrier, and TPC Scottsdale, and a bevy of new players. Also, with sporting online options aplenty via EA Sports' new Online Pass, you'll definitely get a year's worth of play out of it.

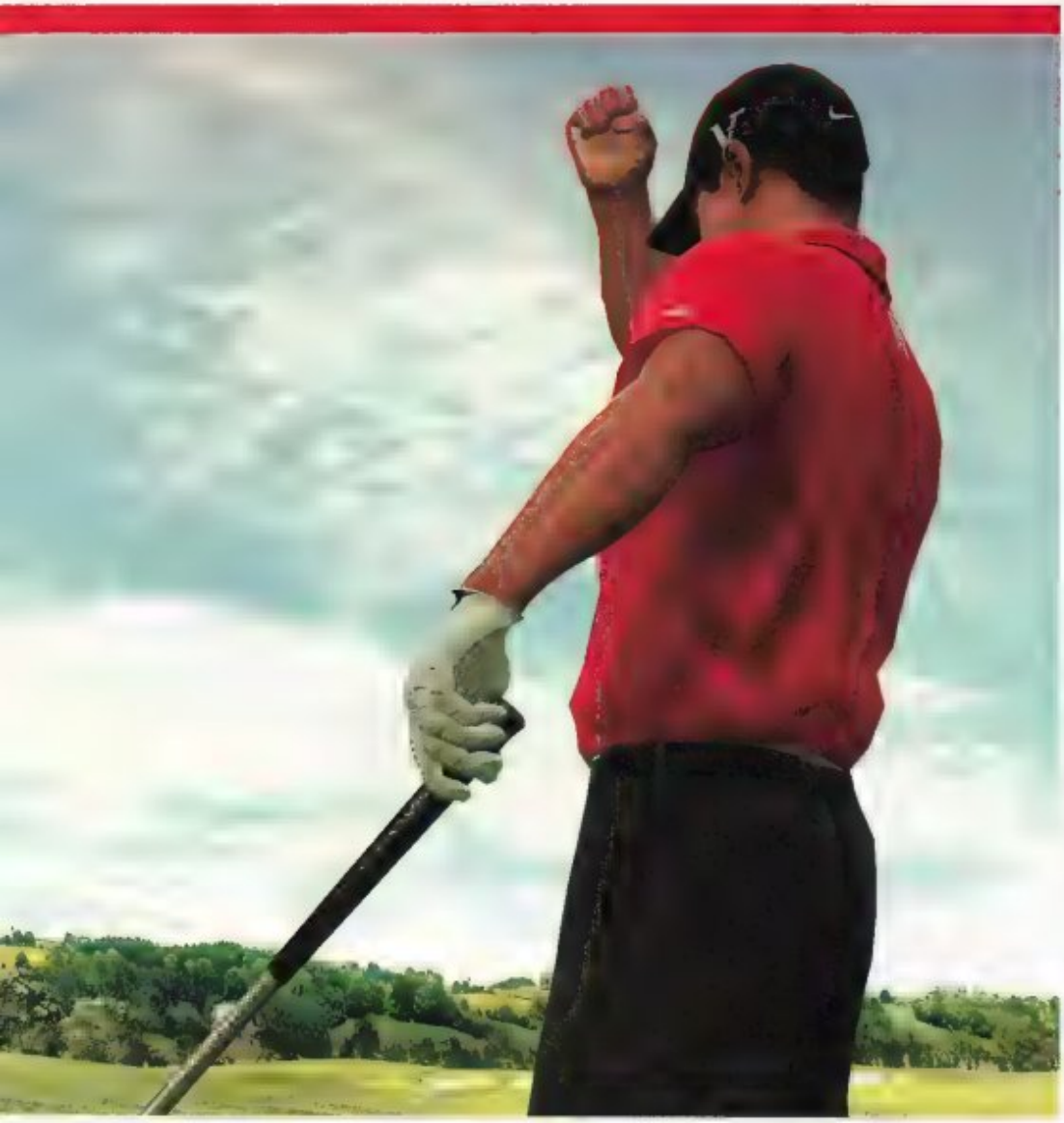
▲ **EXTREME MAKEOVER, TIGER EDITION**
The team that develops the *Tiger Woods PGA Tour* games keeps bumping up the graphic realism with each new version. This shot from *Tiger 11* looks like it could be a photograph.



GAMEPLAY

▲ The Ryder Cup plays a significant role in *Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11*. Whether you're competing for the United States or Europe, you'll find the competition to be pretty good.

▲ While at first we were somewhat dubious of Focus, the more we used it, the more we liked it. Be careful how you use it, though. If you keep hitting the Putt Preview button, you'll be screwed on the next hole.



XBOX 360 PS3 Wii

GAME DETAILS & RATINGS

EVERYONE E

TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 11

INFO
Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Sports
Platforms: PS3, Xbox 360, Wii

MULTIPLAYER ONLINE
Up to 24 players online

GENRE
Sports

RELEASE DATE
June 8, 2010

SUITABLE FOR:
Golf lovers who are willing to put in the time to learn the subtleties of the game's ever-evolving swing mechanics.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- Once you get the hang of the swing mechanics, this game is truly addictive. The more you play it, the more it begins to feel like real golf.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- There's a bit of a learning curve. Also, the fact that it uses EA Sports' Online Pass means that players who pick up a used copy will have to pony up an extra $10 to play online.

- Realism
- Learning Curve
- Online Options

OVERALL RATING: 4/5

PLATFORMS: A BUNDLE FOR ALL

PS3

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 will support the PlayStation Move controller when it comes out. We're extremely excited about this. We love the look and feel of the game on the next-gen systems, but golf is a tactile game that's made for a motion controller.

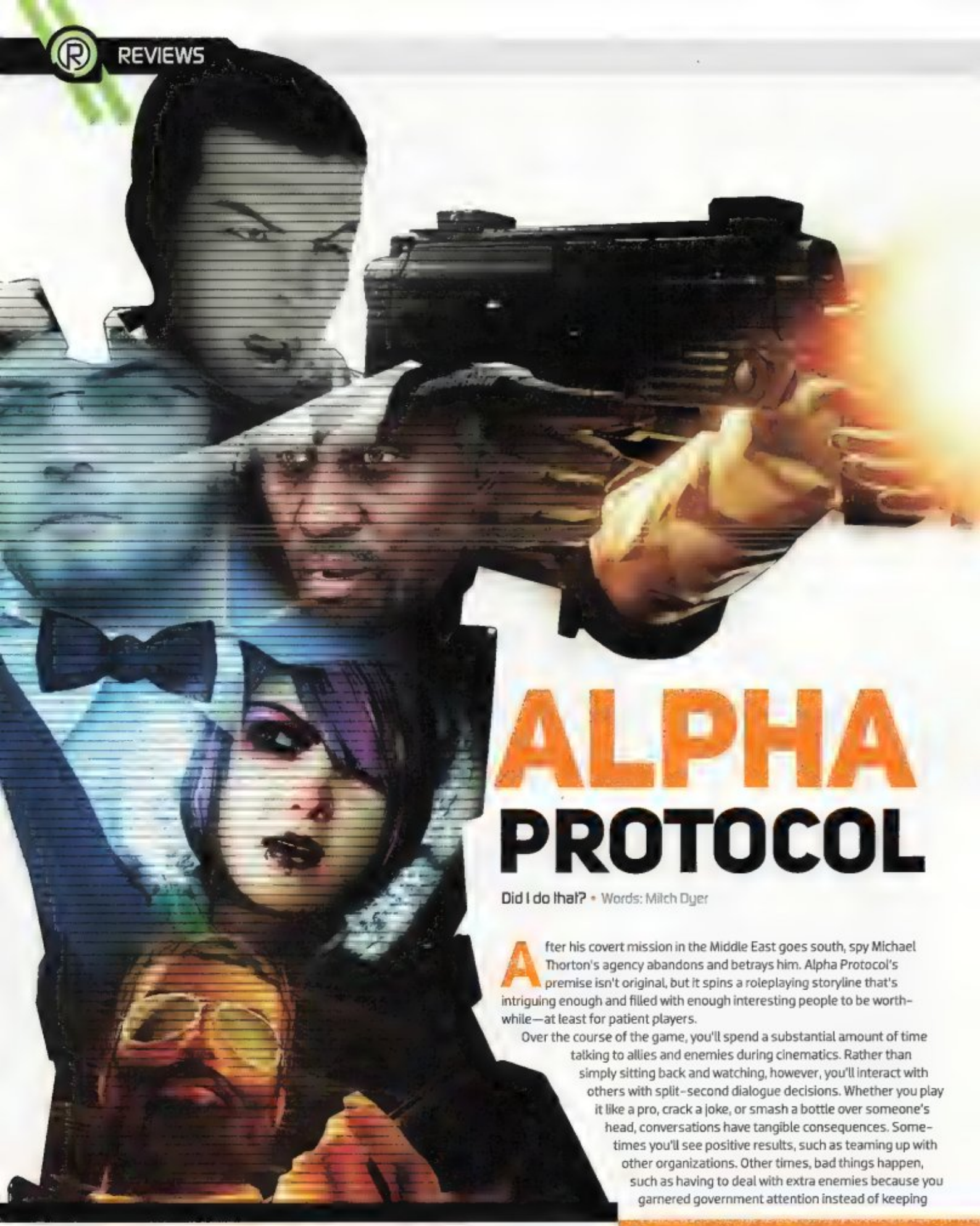
XBOX 360

While the Xbox 360 lacks the motion control of the Wii and Move-capable PS3, the Xbox 360's massive installed base and online community means that you'll have no shortage of virtual golfers to play with and/or against.

Wii

Sure, the Wii may lack many of the bells and whistles as its bigger siblings the PS3 and the Xbox 360, but it's almost the perfect platform for a game like Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11. Add to that the fact that nearly everyone in America has one, the Wii and Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11 go hand-in-hand.

ANDY SAYS: Every year, the latest Tiger ends up in my console and doesn't leave for weeks, keeping me from playing other games. I'm looking forward to seeing if Tiger 11 causes the same problem.



ALPHA PROTOCOL

Did I do that? • Words: Mitch Dyer

After his covert mission in the Middle East goes south, spy Michael Thorton's agency abandons and betrays him. Alpha Protocol's premise isn't original, but it spins a roleplaying storyline that's intriguing enough and filled with enough interesting people to be worthwhile—at least for patient players.

Over the course of the game, you'll spend a substantial amount of time talking to allies and enemies during cinematics. Rather than simply sitting back and watching, however, you'll interact with others with split-second dialogue decisions. Whether you play it like a pro, crack a joke, or smash a bottle over someone's head, conversations have tangible consequences. Sometimes you'll see positive results, such as teaming up with other organizations. Other times, bad things happen, such as having to deal with extra enemies because you garnered government attention instead of keeping

BITES

PRESS QUOTES

"Upgradable skills and riveting dialogue kept us coming back..." –*OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE*

How much chit-chat is there in Alpha Protocol? Obsidian calculates it has "about 12,000 lines [across] 12 hours of cinematic footage, but because of all the branching, you're only going to see about a third of it on any one playthrough." Also, "Playing the game again in Recruit or Veteran mode gives brand-new dialogue options."

quiet. When it comes to the game's characters, you'll invariably see a mixture of both effects.

The people you interact with are all interesting in their own way, with unique agendas and characteristics that you can conform to or manipulate. If you put your morality aside to play along with a sociopath's sadistic schemes, for instance, he'll be a long-term aid. Executing or sparing enemies—or betraying allies—will also affect how the story branches. Sometimes, depending on how you play, you may even miss meeting major characters entirely. Almost every choice you make noticeably changes your path, and you'll constantly be having "what if..." thoughts as events unfold. It's a great way to see the story evolve, and even in spite of other issues, it's a tempting incentive to run through a second time.

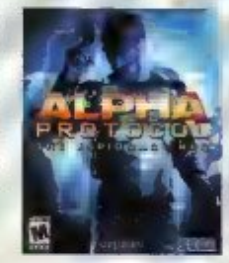
When you're not wooing women, beating people for info, or coercing an enemy into teaming up, you'll spend your time in the field. Unlike conversations, missions usually go one of two ways: Stealthy spies sneak through back rooms, where there are usually useful items or info to steal, while an aggressive, no-holds-barred approach results in loud firefights. Either way, the awful AI barely qualifies as opposition; a drunk, one-legged Stormtrooper has better peripheral vision and gun accuracy.

Thorton is no ace shot, either. Because Alpha Protocol strives to be an action game and a role-playing game, die-rolls determine a shot's success, crippling you with unnecessary inaccuracy. Gun upgrades solve this, but there are other, equally important skills to invest in: Sneaky players thrive on their stealth skill, and hacking, lock-breaking, and other infiltration-based mini-games benefit from upgrades. Having so many upgradable attributes is great, but takes away from the core of Alpha Protocol's competent, though often unexciting, combat.

Ultimately, Alpha Protocol is too ambitious for its own good. While it succeeds in some areas, it misses the mark in others. If you're tolerant enough to endure a repetitive mission structure and so-so shooting, the absorbing story and memorable characters are enough to satisfy the espionage-obsessed.

XBOX 360 PS3 PC

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS



ALPHA PROTOCOL

INFO
Publisher: SEGA
Developer: Obsidian
Platforms: Xbox 360, PS3, PC

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Single player only

GENRE
Action RPG

RELEASE DATE
June 1, 2010

SUITABLE FOR:
Armchair spies who like talking or shooting their way out of any tough jams they face.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- There's variety in how you can play the game.
- Fantastic character conversation and choices with genuine consequences.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- The game's AI-driven characters aren't all that smart or challenging, and its combat scenarios are subpar.

- Talk-tastic
- Sweet Secret Agent Skills
- Branching Story

OVERALL RATING: 3/5

ANDY SAYS:

It's a plus when a game takes the story in a different direction when you make a choice in dialogue or action. Obsidian has a history of deep RPGs, so branching storylines should really help the game's replayability.

DS

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

DRAGON BALL: ORIGINS 2

INFO
Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Game Republic
Platforms: Nintendo DS

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Two-player co-op challenges

GENRE
Action/Adventure

RELEASE DATE
June 22, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Old-school otaku looking for an enjoyable on-the-go adventure.

WHAT'S GREAT:
- The developers took nice advantage of the DS' two screens to keep the player entertained and make control pretty easy.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:
- Boss fights aren't well tuned or designed, and negatively affect gameplay.

- Touch to Clobber
- Cute Cutscenes
- Frustrating Bosses

OVERALL RATING: 3.5/5

DRAGON BALL: ORIGINS 2

This kid has balls... • Words: Mitch Dyer

Few franchises have the persistent popularity of Dragon Ball. The original set the stage with its lovable characters and Dragon Ball: Origins 2 tries to harken back to those long lost days.

One thing that sticks out about DB:O2 is its presentation. The story—which spans the Red Ribbon Army arc—is a mixture of goofy and grim, and the DS' dual screens accentuate it. While a menacing jerk burns a forest on one screen, the lighthearted Goku cracks jokes about how he's going to solve the problem on the other. Solid voiceovers, funny writing, and varying camera angles keep you genuinely interested in the cinematics, too, which is a step above the voice bubbles and still-frame faces that populate many other DS games.

The action between cinematics is enjoyable as well, mostly thanks to the simple touch-based combat. Tapping and sliding your stylus enables you to easily attack enemies with cool combos, while touching where you want to go shuffles Goku across the 3D world. The rudimentary nature of it eventually wears thin, but thankfully, Origins 2 gives you the ability to play as other characters (Krillin, for example) with their own unique abilities. Light dashes of role-playing elements, such as experience points and upgrades, also incentivize your progression.

Accolades aside, the boss fights in Origins 2 aren't just aggravating because the big bads are cheap due to unbreakable and almost-unavoidable attacks, but because the episodes they conclude don't contain checkpoints. When you die, you're done, and it's back to the start of the episode. Losing secret treasures you've found hurts, too. All combined, however, the quirky story and cool combat outweigh the less-than-perfect parts of Dragon Ball: Origins 2.

DBZ DVD OMG!

FUNimation recently released Dragon Ball Z Kai, a pseudo-redux of the sequel series to Dragon Ball. Part One's 13-episode DVD and Blu-ray features a remastered aspect ratio, re-recorded English dialogue, and a stronger, succinct presentation of the original Saiyan story arc. If anything can rekindle your DBZ love, this is it.

WITHOUT CHARACTER FLAWS

Namco Bandai has captured the look and spirit of the characters in this Nintendo DS version. If you're a fan of the *Dragon Ball* manga series, you should really enjoy the game, which presents the universe and its inhabitants quite authentically.

This is Ben, and he plays video games. Before dinner, he's been a star athlete, arch wizard and crime fighter.
Ben's mom is glad the ESRB is around to help make sure
her family.
help her make the best choices for
all this stuff, with clear ratings on every game to
HELLO
my name is
Ben
EVERYONE 10+
10+
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

www.ESRB.org

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GAME DETAILS & RATINGS

ACE COMBAT: JOINT ASSAULT

Publisher: Namco Bandai
Developer: Namco Bandai
Platforms: PSP

4-player co-op, 8-player competitive (ad-hoc and infrastructure)

Flight Combat

July/August 2010

Flight fans looking for some on-the-go dogfighting action with friends.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- Pocketable flight combat is hard to pass up, especially when it's a solid-quality aerial fighter.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Veteran gaming pilots might find it a bit soft—not offering enough challenge for their advanced skills.

- Cool Co-Op
- Dog-Fighting Fun
- High Flying

OVERALL RATING: 4/5

Despite being a portable game, *Joint Assault*'s graphics look great.

ACE COMBAT: JOINT ASSAULT

Flight combat soars, thanks to campaign co-op support • Words: Matt Cabral

There are those who play every *Ace Combat* game that Namco Bandai cranks out, and those that have no idea *Ace Combat* even exists. In a nutshell, *Ace Combat* puts players in the cockpits of real-world aircraft, and their trigger fingers behind the power of some serious firepower. The game is less a flight sim than it is about blowing stuff up.

Ace Combat: Joint Assault, lands on the PSP with a cargo hold full of new features. The core gameplay, campaign objectives, and overall presentation will be familiar to anyone who has taken to the skies before in the series. But small tweaks, such as a new camera that brings you closer to the action and real-world settings (the franchise previously stuck with a fictionalized world), make the game even more compelling.

The real draw, though, is the impressive suite of local and online multiplayer options

available in ad-hoc and infrastructure modes. Players can turn friends' crafts into black smoke-spitting metal husks in competitive play or recruit up to three fly-boy buddies to tackle the full campaign. The co-op play is a blast, especially when effective teamwork evokes Star Wars trench run–like camaraderie. *Ace Combat: Joint Assault*, even with these new features, probably won't entice rookie pilots, but faithful fans are in for a high-flying good time.

IN THE BEGINNING

Air Combat **hit the original PlayStation in 1995. Since then, there have been six sequels.** ***Ace Combat X: Skies of Deception*** **in 2006 was its first run on the PSP. In addition to all of those titles, the series has also seen iPhone and GameBoy Advance entries. So, if you're new to the franchise, you'd better get caught up and do some flying!**

ANDY SAYS:

I've been looking for a new reason to pull my PSP out of its case, and this might be the one. The *Ace Combat* series has always been fun, and being able to take it with you would make it all the better.

Because Jess plays video games the ESRB
(that's the Entertainment Software Rating Board) understands that some games aren't right for everyone.
Just like movies, every game has a rating. And those ratings come from the ESRB.
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

www.ESRB.org

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You'd look that way, too, if your foot was caught in a trap.

NAUGHTY BEAR

He's not a bad bear...he's just stuffed that way • Words: Andy Eddy

We've all heard about cases like this before: someone worn down by years of abuse or torment—perhaps taunted by a bunch of don't-know-better schoolmates, ground down by a heartless boss or hounded by a selfish spouse. Friends and family see that his furrowed brow never goes away, and then one day he just snaps, looking to take the power back with ultra-violent acts against those who snatched it from him day after agonizing day.

Naughty Bear takes us into such a situation, though it's easier to be sympathetic to his plight when you see a stuffed animal whose hide is frayed and stitched up, and who has a constant look of pain on his face—up until he rages against those seeking to repress and harm him. It's up to you, though, to guide him on his mission to methodically stalk, harass, and dispatch his enemies.

Of course, it's a video game, so everything you do earns points, and the more severe (or crazed) the action, the higher your naughty multiplier goes. Take a break (hide in a safe place or with no bears in close proximity) and the multiplier goes down. You can't help being bad... *Naughty Bear* is making you do it!

The game also urges you to take care of his tormentors through as many means possible, because if you use the same method again in a level, you score less. Developer A2M and publisher 505 Games claim there are more than 200 ways to be naughty, ranging from pummeling with fists to employing one of the game's many weapons. If you do enough harm to a character, you can trigger a special kill for big points. The wildest (and most fun) method is to drive a foe insane by scaring him, attacking his surroundings, or smashing objects nearby (such as statues). Pile up enough fear and you'll be able to unleash a special super-scare move that'll get him so anxious that...well, he'll do himself in, saving you the trouble.

As you progress, you'll unlock new levels, as well as costume items. These not only give Naughty Bear an improved sense of style, but the collectables also tweak his attributes, making him stronger or faster, for instance.

Completing more of the game unlocks special Challenge Modes. Each one has rules that you have to follow in order to not only ring the scoreboard in a big way, but also to guarantee that you'll complete and exit the level successfully. For example, one mode forces you to only take out bears once they're insane, while others require you to get through the level without taking any damage or get as many points as you can and then exit before the timer ticks down to zero. They'll really test your gameplay abilities and, in some cases, patience. It'll take a lot of both to earn 100 percent completion in *Naughty Bear*.

PLAY WELL WITH OTHERS

Multiplayer is also supported, enabling up to four players to compete in a handful of gameplay settings that will be mostly familiar to online gamers: Assault has players either defending or attacking a statue; Cake Walk gives points to the one holding the Golden Cupcake, though the holder is vulnerable to attack and moves slower; Golden Oozy puts one gun in the area and gives it unlimited ammo; and Jelly Wars, a team vs. team match that awards a win to the first team that can put five "jellies" into their mixer. Though it won't likely pull gamers away from *Halo*'s and *Call of Duty*'s online battles, it should extend the lifespan for *Naughty Bear* owners in search of added variety.

THAT'S JUST CRAZY...

Learning what pushes another bear over the edge is key—especially in a challenge mode that requires you to intimidate bears into madness in order to complete it successfully. You can accomplish this by doing a lot of "BOO!" yells from the woods (where you're relatively safe), but also by smashing objects and windows...and then target bears to the point of death, which makes them easier to mentally unhinge. One good method is by placing traps, which will terrorize the victim, but you can reuse the snares to build up the horror until worry bubbles from your enemy's head.

XBOX 360 PS3

GAME DETAILS & RATINGS

NAUGHTY BEAR

INFO
Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Bungie
Platforms: Xbox 360, PS3

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Up to four players across four different gameplay modes.

GENRE
Action

RELEASE DATE
June 29, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Players who like their games more than a little twisted.

FOLLOW THE LEADER(BOARD)

Getting through the game is just part of the challenge. To many, it'll also be finishing each level with a high score that'll beat our friends and fellow gamers around the world on the Naughty Bear leaderboards. With nearly everything you do resulting in at least some points, it's easy to earn a score—but you'll need to keep your multiplier up to get the big points. Try to line up a series of actions in a row after you've made a good kill, which will bring you a big multiplier. It's even better if you know where you can run over a multiplier-freezing pick-up, which will keep the multiplier going while you continue tormenting. Destroying a bunch of items and perhaps making that last kill by driving the final bear insane will bring you a large score before you exit the level.

WIL SAYS: Naughty Bear is one of those games that's wrong and right at the same time. You'll probably feel bad the first few times you terrorize other bears, but when you're down on the leaderboard and looking to get a better score, you'll lose the guilt and really bear down to improve. (See what I did there? Okay, sorry...)

WHAT'S GREAT:

- There's something sadistically satisfying in driving a stuffed animal insane.
- The leaderboards will provide a separate layer of competition, pushing players to replay levels for better times.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- The game camera can cause you to get disoriented—and often at the worst possible time.

- Bizarre
- Plush Violence
- Skill Tester

OVERALL RATING: 3.5/5

GAME OF THE MONTH

SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2

Proof the universe is always expanding

• Words: Meghan Walt

With each new Nintendo console, another reinvention of the Super Mario franchise emerges. But Nintendo didn't have to head back to the drawing board this time around. Instead, *Super Mario Galaxy 2* is packed with enough creativity and innovation that the game pretty much reinvents itself every time Mario visits a new in-game world.

At its heart, it's still a 3D platform game, but it packs a ton of cool and fun game mechanics. One moment, you're tilting the Wiimote on a Super Monkey Ball–esque world, the next, you're digging through a planet's core with a Mario-sized drill head to puncture a giant Koopa's belly. Every 15 minutes, you feel like you're playing a different Mario title. In fact, some concepts debut only to disappear the moment Mario's spaceship lifts off. This unfortunately cuts short some of the better ideas that could almost be passed off as standalone games—though if you don't like a particular concept, you can ditch it and likely never see it again.

The game's many environments also feature unique gameplay elements, which Mario can conquer by gobbling down the appropriate mushrooms to give him special abilities. For instance, Cloud Mario conjures three clouds as temporary platforms, while Rock Mario bowls over enemies and through walls. In tandem with drilling, ice-skating, flipping gravity and other actions, Mario's wardrobe is yet another factor in his chaotic search for those 120 elusive stars.

This constant variety certainly keeps you on your toes, demanding quick thinking on top of quick reflexes. Fortunately, you have a helping hand in the form of Yoshi, Mario's beloved dino buddy, who makes his debut on the galactic stage to help the poor guy collect those stars and—say it with me—save the princess.

Even with Mario on Yoshi's back, the diminutive dino is a force on his own. By pointing at the screen with the Wiimote, Yoshi can execute his trademark talent: sucking up and launching enemies and other objects. Yoshi also gains special abilities like his plumber companion by gulping down fruits, thus creating an inflatable Yoshi or ridiculously fast, wall-climbing Yoshi. His tongue can also latch onto flowers in order to swing the duo up onto higher ledges.

Surprisingly, all of this Wiimote pointing won't turn you against the controller. Other scenarios, such as the Super Monkey Ball–style sequence and a few aerial races, require Wiimote use that is astoundingly well-integrated. The controls are always reliable, and the more gimmicky uses aren't overplayed. Pointing at the screen is enough fun that you might even want to invite a friend to play cooperatively with you. Although the second player can't do all that much, he or she can catch Star Bits, 1-Ups, and other items, as well as perform Spin Attacks on enemies. Still, even with these abilities, the game is definitely a single-player experience.

The only real downside to this vastly improved sequel is the complete absence of a story. The first *Galaxy* title showed off the Nintendo team's editorial prowess. But in the sequel, throwaway characters and forgettable dialogue cut away at the game's charm, despite the precious graphics and cute sound effects. On the other hand, you'll probably be too wrapped up in one of Nintendo's best Mario adventures to care about Peach's cake.

GAME PLAY

STAR STRUCK

Beating SMG2 only requires 70 of the 120 stars—avoid galaxies you don't like and you'll reach the end without much digging. Going slightly off the beaten path for each galaxy's Comet Medal summons the Prankster Comet, bringing another, more demanding trial. The final tier is reserved for the hardcore. To completely conquer SMG2 requires 242 stars—the last few needing nifty acrobatics and meticulous sweeping and re-sweeping of each level. Yes...we're working on it.

ANDY SAYS:

Compared to the other "next-generation consoles," Wii pales...but if you own one, you have to pre-order and stand in line to get any game with "Super Mario" in the title—you know it'll be worth it!

LET'S PLAY TWO

Super Mario Galaxy 2 is the first time in over 20 years that Nintendo has released two traditional Mario titles on the same console. Usually, Shigeru Miyamoto waits for new hardware before launching a sequel. But the first Galaxy only grazed the surface of how the development team could toy with such things as gravitational pulls and dimensions. With so much room for creativity, there was no reason to wait. By sticking with the same basic concept, the team could fully realize the game's potential, from adding Mario's faithful pal to offering tougher challenges for fans who already aced the prequel.

PRESS QUOTES

"What makes the sequel so compelling, though, is that it isn't just more of the same, there are tons of new gameplay elements."
–*Nintendo Power Magazine*

"*Galaxy 2* is one of the year's top games on any system, and one of the few must-have reasons to buy a Wii..."
–*GamesRadar.com*

Wii

GAME DETAILS AND RATINGS

SUPER MARIO GALAXY 2

INFO
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo EAD Tokyo
Platforms: Wii

MULTIPLAYER/ONLINE
Limited two-player co-op

GENRE
Platformer

RELEASE DATE
May 23, 2010

SUITABLE FOR
Casual gamers, hardcore platformer enthusiasts and everyone in between.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- Miyamoto and his development team always make an enjoyable romp and keep the carrot of success dangling right in front of you.
- Admit it: When Mario goes on the shelf, you miss him. New games let you buddy up with him again.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Less-than-stellar story and some throwaway characters.

- Star Fetching
- Gravity Defiance
- Acrobatics

OVERALL RATING: 5/5

SNIPER: GHOST WARRIOR

Sometimes it's all about the [illegible] the

Words: Andy Eddy

The game's name says it all: *Sniper: Ghost Warrior*. They're the stealth soldiers, specializing in dispatching an enemy while staying relatively out of sight. (To show the extremes, Craig Harrison of the British Army recently picked up a world record for a sniper shot he took in November 2009, where he reportedly picked off a target from a distance of 8,120 feet. That's about a mile and a half away.) Despite the fact that City Interactive's *Sniper* isn't entirely about stealth combat (as I'll discuss in a minute), it certainly does enough to live up to its moniker...and provides some good old-fashioned shooter action.

To some shooter fans, snipers are battlefield cheapskates, because they don't face the same adversity as those battling in close proximity to the enemy. No matter how you look at the role, it does take patience and skill to take someone out from far away, especially if the target is on the move. *Sniper* pushes the challenge a bit further by frequently making you sneak around a dangerous battlefield and hide in the shrubs.

Some missions give you a nice lofty perch for long-distance shots with a sniper rifle. Others offer greenery that allow you to sneak closer to targets, but still take good shots outside your foe's firing range. However, there are also missions where you're given an assault rifle and a handgun, much like in Rainbow Six or Ghost Recon. You'll need to get behind cover and pick your opportunities to clear out your adversaries before moving forward to the next goal.

While *Sniper* might not be on the same technological level, or gameplay intricacy for that matter, as the previously mentioned series of games, it still captures the intensity of trying to stay safe in the middle of a war zone. A stealth meter indicates how well-hidden you are, and watching that rise up from white to red spells trouble almost more than the sound of gunfire getting closer to you. *Sniper* also requires you to adjust for the length of a shot (a bullet does start to drop due to gravity and loses inertia the farther it travels), as well as for a moving target. It'll take you a while to adapt, but once you do, taking out a moving foe with a headshot will be doubly rewarding.

Sniper provides a single-player campaign of about 8–10 hours (with three difficulty levels), but also has a multiplayer component that should extend your gameplay. Deathmatch and Team Deathmatch both support up to 12 players simultaneously in an online or system-link match, while V.I.P. supports up to eight combatants. V.I.P. is a mode that has one player as the marked man and two teams facing off—one trying to protect him while the other seeks to blow him away.

At a time when new games are few, I think *Sniper: Ghost Warrior* is worth playing by anyone who appreciates the art of the stealthy kill.

WIL SAYS: Sniper isn't the best shooter I've seen, but looking over Andy's shoulder while he played...it looked like fun. That's what we're looking for, right?

GAMEPLAY

BELLY UP TO THE STEALTH BAR

SHH...IT'S A SECRET!

One of the side objectives in *Sniper* is to gather up "secrets." These are pickups that contain intel that gives you a little more about the story and the people in it. Though it doesn't seem possible to view the secrets from within the game, they make the gameplay objectives a little more believable. Of course, if you're a "completionist" (someone who has to finish every aspect of a game), you'll want to take the time to discover all of them. Be sure to scour every building in your vicinity.

GRAPHIC COMBAT ON THE BATTLEFIELD

Other games may exceed *Sniper* graphically or from an animation standpoint, but the game still does a good job at presentation. It also delivers the feeling of being threatened, and that you're a release valve for the intense pressure that's building up in the region. An especially cool visual is when you line up a really tight shot and pull the trigger—the camera switches to a third-person view of the bullet cutting through the air and hitting the target, up close and personal.

XBOX 360 PC

RATINGS

GAME DETAILS

SNIPER: GHOST WARRIOR

INFO

Publisher: City Interactive
Developer: City Interactive
Platforms: Xbox 360, PC

MULTIPLAYER ONLINE

Up to 8 or 12 players, depending on the mode, online or via system link.

GENRE

First-person shooter

RELEASE DATE

June 29, 2010

SNIPER PLAYER

Game gunners who like getting it done from a safe distance.

OGAMER

WHAT'S GREAT:

- The feeling that you could be discovered at any second.
- Having a slow-motion view to a kill is decadent, but thrilling.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- The visuals and animation could be better.

- Realism
- Thrilling
- Online Options

OVERALL RATING: 3/5

PC

GAME DETAILS & RATINGS

THE SIMS 3: AMBITIONS

Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: The Sims Studio
Platforms: PC

Single-player only

Simulation

Out now

Fans and veterans of *The Sims 3*. (Requires *The Sims 3* to play.)

THE SIMS 3: AMBITIONS

The workplace, revealed • Words: Meghan Walt

After tattooing the neighbors, banishing ghosts, and time-traveling, how were we once satisfied with just pets and vacations? *The Sims 3: Ambitions* is fan service at its best. It not only delivers on every Sims fan's desire to fully control the workplace, but it offers other coveted features.

Most of *Ambitions*' hands-on professions function at certain hours, alerting you to where your expertise is needed, whether that's styling hair or vacuuming spirits Ghostbusters-style from the living room. Others allow Sims to register as self-employed and work on their own time. While rewarding, these professions have rather rocky, chore-heavy beginnings before truly feeling worthwhile. But even a genius inventor needs to tinker with wind-up toys before constructing a time machine, heading to the past, woohoo'ing with the neighbor, and returning to the future only to discover that the local doctor is actually your son. Manipulating your Sims at work also translates to zero downtime. Initially chaotic, this constant activity becomes a captivating thrill.

Ambitions could pass as a buy-worthy expansion with its new professions alone. But EA saw fit to throw in a whole slew of other goodies that launches *Ambitions* into the "must-have" category. Basements are now another building feature, just as easy to construct as a second floor. These windowless floors are perfect for the second biggest addition: laundry. Washing dirty clothes is bizarrely appealing—but if you find the prospect annoying, just don't buy the appliances. You'll still be able to enjoy the tattoos, added hairstyles, new apparel, and more that this expansion has to offer.

Aside from the ability to make medical house calls, the other jobs don't change. Your Sim still disappears into work wonderland and then reappears stressed, tired, and a tad richer. But who wants to launch a business career when there are Frankenstein monsters to be made? With seven hands-on professions and a bucket of new and improved features, this fine-tuned expansion is bound to rekindle your addiction.

SIM(PLY) FABULOUS

Building sweet houses, placing furniture, and turning your Sim into a starlit fashionista can be just as fun as actually playing the game. To give you more creative outlets, *Ambitions* adds two new professions: interior decorator and stylist. When a client commissions you to redecorate, you can knock down their walls and install HDTVs and whatever else your heart desires—as long as you stay within budget. As a stylist, you customize NPCs' hairstyles and outfits or create tattoos in line with the clients' particular tastes.

▲ There is a teeny-weeny chance of having an unhappy customer at the salon.

▲ This could be a reason to celebrate or abject failure... we aren't really sure yet.

WHAT'S GREAT:

- We finally get our hands in what the Sims do when they go off to work.
- Basements in buildings.

WHAT'S NOT SO GREAT:

- Still no idea what they're saying...

- Workplace Invasion
- More WooHooing
- Time Paradoxes

OVERALL RATING: 4.5/5

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Whether you're looking for a graphics card upgrade or you need to enhance your console setup, we've got your back.

88 1.2GB Galaxy GeForce GTX 470 Graphics Card

89 1.5GB PNY GeForce GTX 480 Graphics Card

90 Tritton AX 720 Gaming Headset

91 Turtle Beach Ear Force X41 Wireless Gaming Headset

92 Iomega Prestige Desktop 1TB External HDD

93 Western Digital My Book Essential 2TB External HDD

Photos: Mark Madeo

WIL SAYS: Welcome to the @GAMER Gear Section. Whether you're building the ultimate custom rig or tricking out your PS3, we've got the must-have gear for any gamer.

GeForce Shootout!

NVIDIA'S GTX 470/480

With the release of their GTX 470 and GTX 480 GPUs, Nvidia is no longer in second place!

GALAXY GEFORCE GTX 470

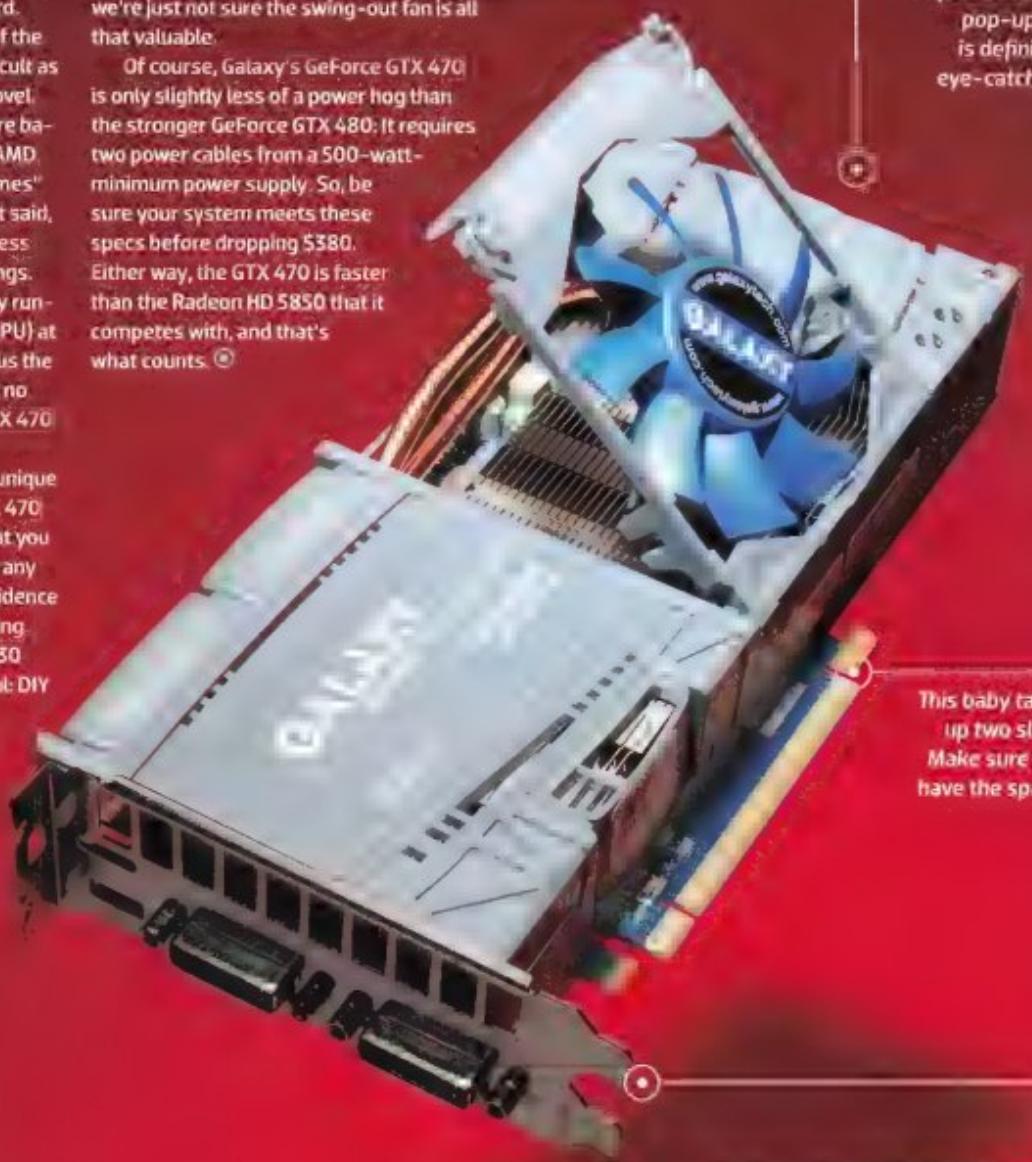
If you play PC games you need a decent (if not downright great) graphics card. The thing is, making heads or tails of the graphics card scene is about as difficult as following the plot of a Dan Brown novel. Things are simpler now that there are basically two players: Nvidia and ATI/AMD. Of course, even in these "simpler times" there are decisions to be made. That said, the Galaxy GeForce GTX 470 is the less expensive of Nvidia's newest offerings.

Nvidia achieves the lower cost by running the graphics processing unit (GPU) at a slower clock speed (607MHz versus the GTX 480's 700MHz). But this card is no slouch, as Galaxy overclocks the GTX 470 on this card to 625MHz.

Galaxy has also come up with a unique cooling solution for its GeForce GTX 470 card: The fan can be removed, so that you can access the heatsink to blow out any dust bunnies that might take up residence there. But are the factory overclocking and custom cooling really worth a $30 boost in street price? We're doubtful: DIY overclocking is easy to do these days, and we're just not sure the swing-out fan is all that valuable.

Of course, Galaxy's GeForce GTX 470 is only slightly less of a power hog than the stronger GeForce GTX 480: It requires two power cables from a 500-watt-minimum power supply. So, be sure your system meets these specs before dropping $380. Either way, the GTX 470 is faster than the Radeon HD 5850 that it competes with, and that's what counts.

With a window in your case this pop-up fan is definitely eye-catching.



This baby takes up two slots. Make sure you have the space.

The Galaxy GeForce GTX 470 boasts two DVI ports as well as HDMI

	GeForce GTX 470	GeForce GTX 480	Radeon HD 5870
	3.0 billion	3.0 billion	2.15 billion
	448	480	1600
	625MHz	700MHz	850MHz
	1,116MHz	1,401MHz	1,200MHz
	1.25GB GDDR5	1.5GB GDDR5	1GB GDDR5
	320-bit	384-bit	256-bit

INFO

MANUFACTURER
Galaxy
www.galaxytech.com

RETAIL VALUE
$379.99

RATINGS

- Affordable
- Fast
- Eye-catching

OVERALL RATING

3

Words: Michael Brown

	GeForce GTX 470	GeForce GTX 480	Radeon HD 5870
Battle Forge (fps)	46.9	58.4	45.5
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Left 4 Dead (fps)	119	125	104
Stalker: Call of Pripyat (fps)	57.3	47.2	41.5

Like most high-end graphics cards, the GTX 480 requires two power plugs.

Tucked away nicely, the fan on the GTX 480 is nice and quiet.

A cool GPU is a happy GPU.

INFO

MANUFACTURER
PNY
www.pny.com

RETAIL VALUE
$499.99

RATINGS

- Power-hungry
- Fast
- Pricey

OVERALL RATING

4

Words: Michael Brown

THE GEFORCE GTX 480 IS FASTER THAN AMD'S TOP-SHELF PRODUCT.

Like the GTX 470 on the previous page, this baby rocks two DVI ports as well as HDMI.

PNY GEFORCE GTX 480

Nvidia's GTX 400-series of graphics processing units (GPUs) puts the company back in first place in front of rival ATI/AMD. The GPU at the heart of PNY's GeForce GTX 480 is Nvidia's best GPU to date.

The GeForce GTX 480 is fully compliant with Microsoft's DirectX 11 gaming architecture, which means that this badass piece of hardware can handle anything that the latest games throw at it. We ran both cards through a battery of performance tests. We tested both cards in *Battle Forge*, *Crysis Warhead*, *Left 4 Dead* and *Stalker: Call of Pripyat* and recorded the framerates. Running these benchmarks showed us that the GeForce GTX 480 is significantly faster than AMD's top-shelf product, the Radeon HD 5870.

On the down side, the GTX 480 consumes gobs of electricity, and your PC will need a beefy power supply to feed it: PNY's card requires both an eight-pin and a six-pin power cable from a 600-watt minimum power supply unit. So, similarly to the GeForce GTX 470, be sure that your system has the requisite specs before dropping $500 on this beast.

TRITTON AX 720

Tritton, recently acquired by Mad Catz, makes great gaming headsets. Now, if the initial setup doesn't scare you away, you're in for a treat. Boasting Dolby Digital 5.1 audio, the AX 720 makes a game like *Viva Piñata* feel theatrical. And while playing a run-of-the-mill shooter, I was able to hear sounds I didn't even know existed, including important nuances such as the jingling of dog tags as someone drew close to my position. Not to mention, I could hear my teammates clearly over the in-game carnage thanks to the separate voice and game volume controls readily available on the inline controller. Not the multiplayer chatting type? No problem. The flexible microphone is easily removed.

The inline controller does add a slight weight to the overall setup, but the comfort level compensates for it. The ear pads and foam-lined headrail hugged my head to the set. The supports are even removable if padding isn't your thing. The wires could be seen as a pitfall, but I'd rather be wired than have to replace the batteries constantly.

Can you hear me?

TRASH TALK, ANYONE?

Being able to harass your enemies and stay in contact with your buddies is a great way to enjoy your gaming experience.

The padded headset is extremely comfortable.
This nifty control panel helps keep you connected at all times.
The mic is well-located, making it easy to taunt your foes.
The wired remote is convenient.

INFO

MANUFACTURER:
Tritton Technologies
www.trittontechnologies.com

COMPATIBLE WITH:
Xbox 360, PS3, PC, Mac

RETAIL VALUE:
$129.99

RATINGS

- Wired
- 5.1 Audio
- Padded

OVERALL RATING

4

Words: Heather Balfron

TURTLE BEACH: EAR FORCE X41

If you're the kind of person who sees themselves logging countless hours in a multiplayer game, then the Ear Force X41 for Xbox 360 from Turtle Beach may be what you're looking for. The headset is featherweight and the foam ear cups are kind to your noggin, no matter how long you wear them. Voice communication is as clear as talking to a friend (or foe) face-to-face, and the microphone bends in ways I never thought imaginable, making it capable of working with heads (and mouths) of all shapes and sizes. When you're done chatting over Xbox Live you can opt to remove the connector cable that controls the voice volume for a truly wireless experience.

The Ear Force utilizes Dolby Digital 7.1 surround sound and comes with a bass booster in case a massive explosion is imminent. The ear piece houses the volume control as well as the effects booster, which doesn't seem to make much of a difference for the in-game sounds whether it is toggled on or off. Just don't forget about the batteries. Being wireless, this headset will have you stocking up on AAAs.

The headset is light and comfortable

We wore these babies for hours on end during testing

It's great to be untethered.

The removable mic is crystal clear.

The wireless base, which also doubles as a stand, sports several audio inputs.

Featuring Dolby Digital 7.1, the Ear Force X41 sounds amazing.

INFO

MANUFACTURER:
Turtle Beach
www.turtlebeach.com

COMPATIBLE WITH:
Xbox 360

RETAIL VALUE:
$199.99

RATINGS

- Wireless
- Versatile
- Comfortable

OVERALL RATING

3

Words: Heather Bertran

External HDDs

TIME TO BACKUP

Console HDDs are notoriously small. A high-capacity external HDD is a great add-on for a PS3, Xbox 360, PC, or Mac. Wii users are left out in the cold, though.

IOMEGA PRESTIGE
1TB DESKTOP HARD DRIVE

While the PS3 has always supported external hard disk drives (HDD), Microsoft has recently announced its support for external HDDs for the Xbox 360, which, in theory, gives gamers and home-entertainment aficionados the ability to build an easily accessible digital library of movies and music connected to those consoles. Unfortunately, Microsoft is limiting the amount of storage space per external drive to only 16GB! For Xbox 360 users this makes the nicely priced Iomega 1TB Desktop Hard Drive an impractical solution. That said, the news is better for PS3 fans, as long as they have the time and technical acumen to reformat the drive's partition to Fat32, they're looking at a massive amount of data storage for the price of two games.

If you're looking for a good solution for your PC or Mac's storage needs, though, Iomega's device offers a ridiculous amount of storage for the money. A terabyte for about a hundred bucks is as good a deal as you will find, and the easy set-up (plug it in via the USB 2.0 port and you're pretty much good to go) and tough-looking metal case make the whole deal much more attractive. Accolades aside, though, the Iomega Prestige could benefit from a more visible indicator light. Other than that, this sleek external HDD is a great deal. That is, if you're rocking a PS3. Xbox 360 users, however, are urged to stay tuned for a better solution.

The Prestige uses USB 2.0 to hook up to your system.

You'll need an additional outlet to power the Prestige.

$100 for 1TB of storage is tough to beat.

The brushed-metal look will go nicely with any setup.

IOMEGA'S DEVICE OFFERS A RIDICULOUS AMOUNT OF STORAGE...

INFO

MANUFACTURER
Iomega
www.iomega.com

COMPATIBLE WITH
Xbox 360, PS3, PC, and Mac

RETAIL VALUE
$99.99

RATINGS:

- Affordable
- Easy to use
- Slim

OVERALL RATING

4

Words: Tom Price

The shiny black exterior goes really well with a PS3.
This indicator lets you know how much room you have.
Like the Iomega HDD, the Western Digital uses USB 2.0 and needs external power.

INFO

MANUFACTURER:
Western Digital
www.westerndigital.com

COMPATIBLE WITH:
Xbox 360, PS3, PC, and Mac

RETAIL VALUE:
$169.99

RATINGS

- Massive storage
- Simple setup
- Sleek

OVERALL RATING

4

Words: Tom Price

WESTERN DIGITAL MY BOOK ESSENTIAL
2TB EXTERNAL HARD DRIVE

Two whole terabytes sounds like a lot of storage space, especially when you do the math and realize that that's 2,000 gigabytes! You can say, "Oh, I'll never need that much storage," but that's what you thought when you got your first 16GB iPod. And by now that measly hard drive is full, isn't it? Western Digital's My Book Essential 2TB External Hard Drive sounds like a lot of space, but wait until you start putting all those HD movies on there.

While the My Book is limited to the same Xbox 360 compatibility issues as the Iomega drive, the My Book does feature the same easy-to-use USB 2.0 setup. The My Book does have a much more user-friendly indicator on the front that, when illuminated, will actually tell you how full it is. And for the price, you're getting about the same GB-per-dollar as you do with the Iomega drive. The My Book looks a little sleeker than the Iomega, perhaps fitting in better with the polished black aesthetic of your home entertainment center, but on the bang-for-buck meter, it sits quite nicely at the top of the pile of external hard drives.

Like the Iomega drive, the Western Digital My Book is great if you're using a PS3, PC, or Mac. Again, Xbox 360 users are left shorted.

TRUTH OR LIES

Wanna chat? Email Andy at andy@atgamermagazine.com

Video-game history is filled with interesting facts... and that's the truth!

As long as man has been able to talk, he's screwed up the facts for others simply by repeating them. Okay, I don't know if that's true, per se, but it's no surprise that humans often end up playing a big game of Operator, where what went into the ear of one person won't necessarily end up being what comes out of another person's mouth after the info has been passed around a bit.

In an effort to keep the facts right in our precious world of video games, I'll be using this column to set the record straight on numerous facts...and also pass on some cool tidbits—which you can probably use to win gentleman-handshake bets. (I don't condone gambling over video games. Online poker, on the other hand...)

TRUTH OR LIES:
Nintendo's Mario got his name from Nintendo's first landlord in America.

TRUTH

A story was recently posted on Technologizer.com, in which author Benj Edwards provided strong research and follow-up to this interesting tale. Reportedly, Nintendo rented a warehouse as its first headquarters, and Mario Segale was the one renting it. While creating what became the first Donkey Kong game, Shigeru Miyamoto put in a guy who was tasked with saving the girl from the title gorilla. Minoru Arakawa, Nintendo's president, noted that there were similarities between Segale and the little game character. From that point, they took to calling the game's character "Mario" in tribute.

TRUTH OR LIES:
Speaking of Donkey Kong and names, there was a large foul-up in the naming of that arcade game as well, right?

LIES

There have been many stories about how the game was meant to be called *Monkey Kong*, and the "error" that gave it its final name was blamed on many things: a blurry fax; a bad phone connection between Nintendo and U.S. importers; a mistyping of [illegible] ments between Nintendo's Japan and U.S. offices; or a misspelling of the game's [illegible] by the Japanese headquarters. In fact, Snopes.com, a cataloger of urban legends (and debunker of false ones), indicated that Miyamoto intentionally used the word "Donkey" to "convey a sense of stubbornness."

TRUTH OR LIES:
SEGA got its name from its ties to the military.

TRUTH

Well, kind of truth, but the company wasn't a military contractor or anything like that. An American businessman in Japan named David Rosen merged his own Rosen Enterprises with another company that supplied coin-op amusement machines to U.S. military bases. Rosen went with that firm's name, which was Service Games, and shortened it to create SEGA Enterprises.

SEGA

"If it weren't for the ratings, I wouldn't allow my kids to play video games."

"**A few years ago**, my husband David wanted to surprise the kids and bought a video game system. We learned right away to check the ratings in order to decide which games are OK for them to play. We look for the rating symbol on the front of the package to see what age group is recommended and then we read the content descriptors on the back of the box which tells us what's in the game. There are a lot of games out there to choose from and the ratings really help us decide which ones are right for our children."

www.esrb.org.

OK TO PLAY?

CHECK THE RATING ON EVERY VIDEO GAME BOX

RATING SYMBOLS
on the front of the game box

CONTENT DESCRIPTORS
on the back of the game box

WHY ADVERTISE IN @GAMER

THE OFFICIAL GAMES MAGAZINE OF BEST BUY

@GAMER is the essential magazine for all gaming fans. Our readers are affluent early adopters of digital entertainment and consumer technology. Additionally, @GAMER is featured regularly in Best Buy's circular, reaching 45-50 million impressions per week, and in the Reward Zone's emails reaching 10 million subcribers per month.

OUR READERS:

- Circulation: 250,000
- 18-34: 41%
- 35-44: 37%
- Average household income: $85,000
- Play games daily: 77%
- Play games weekly: 97%
- Play more than 10 hours per week: 47%
- $737 spent annually on gaming

Source: Reward Zone Gamers Club member survey, March 2010

CLOSING PRINT SCHEDULE:

COVER	AD SPACE CLOSE	AD MATERIALS DUE	ON SALE
September 2010	29-Jul-2010	5-Aug-2010	29-Aug-2010
October 2010	26-Aug-2010	2-Sep-2010	26-Sep-2010
November 2010	23-Sep-2010	30-Sep-2010	24-Oct-2010
December 2010	28-Oct-2010	4-Nov-2010	28-Nov-2010
Holiday	25-Nov-2010	2-Dec-2010	26-Dec-2010
February/March 2011	30-Dec-2010	6-Jan-2010	30-Jan-2011
April 2011	24-Feb-2011	3-Mar-2011	27-Mar-2011
May 2011	24-Mar-2011	31-Mar-2011	24-Apr-2011
June 2011	28-Apr-2011	5-May-2011	29-May-2011

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PS3 XBOX 360 XBOX LIVE

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